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INFORMATION NOTE ON WFP ASSISTANCE TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

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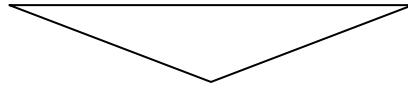
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DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of the recommendations contained in the “Information Note on WFP Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo” (WFP/EB.1/2004/6-B/2).

* 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.



BACKGROUND

1. In April 2003, an evaluation mission managed by the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) was fielded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The team comprised two international and two national consultants, and was supported by an OEDE evaluation officer during the initial stages of the field work.
2. No sooner had the field work been completed and the in-country debriefings held, however, when the mission leader defected, and no evaluation report was ever submitted. A large number of beneficiary interviews had been conducted during the field research phase, an innovation of this evaluation. OEDE and the country office therefore agreed that it would be useful to produce an Information Note on some of the evaluation team's findings and to share these with interested Board members. It must be emphasized, however, that the findings outlined in this report do not represent a full evaluation of WFP assistance.

FIELD RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. The field-level research conducted by the three other team members focused on the population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) assisted under PRRO. Their enquiry was guided by the following major objectives:
 - to confirm whether WFP's relief activities in the DRC had helped to stabilize/improve the nutritional outcomes of vulnerable IDP populations;
 - to determine whether recovery activities carried out in relation to IDPs had helped strengthen household food security and livelihoods; and
 - to make recommendations for the continuation of WFP assistance to IDPs in the DRC.
4. The team members adopted an evidence-based approach, making use of a blend of qualitative and quantitative methods. Participatory approaches and methods were used, including extensive group interviews, focus groups and participatory workshops. Use of these methods highlighted the utility of undertaking a more in-depth examination of the effects of WFP food aid on the country's IDP populations and raised issues related to targeting effectiveness.
5. The team interviewed 663 IDPs throughout the country, of whom 59 percent were women. The sampling strategy included visits to a variety of displacement situations typically found in the DRC context, including government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas,¹ and urban, peri-urban and rural areas, where interviews were held with IDPs who had not received WFP assistance (comparison groups) and with those who had. On-site visits were carried out in and around six urban centres: Mbandaka, Kinshasa, Bukavu, Goma, Beni and Lubumbasi.

¹ The terms government-controlled areas and non-government-controlled areas predates the agreements introduced later in 2003.



GENERAL OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

6. The DRC is among the most challenging and volatile operating environments for WFP in the world. Insecurity represents a major challenge, especially in areas outside of central government control. Most roads are impassable during the rainy season, and local transport capacity is limited. This situation requires WFP to maximize the scant local logistical resources. Many places are accessible only by a combination of river, train and truck transport, a fact that greatly complicates logistics management. Because of these logistical constraints, three independent pipelines must service three different parts of the country.
7. The vulnerable situation of women in the DRC is of particular concern. In non-government areas especially, health indicators are alarming. Routine physical abuse, rape, violence, theft, intimidation, killings and other crimes are widespread, and many women face such threats on a daily basis. For the South Kivu Province alone, there were no fewer than 4,000 reported rapes for March 2003.² Insecurity is a major problem, especially in areas outside government control; this inhibits many needy women and men from receiving any WFP assistance whatsoever. Insecurity is also a major cause of the limited access to agricultural land and food resources that contributes to widespread food insecurity.
8. How well WFP has been able to operate in this very difficult environment and to produce meaningful outcomes for beneficiaries consistent with their relief and recovery needs became a main focus of the team's field research.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF IDPS

9. The team conducted interviews with IDPs in and around six major areas of displacement. These interviews revealed considerable variability in living circumstances. The team generally found that levels of vulnerability to household food insecurity decreased with longer periods of displacement. The most vulnerable sites visited were those in non-government-controlled areas, where the average time of displacement was typically fewer than 12 months, and where many people were continually on the move. In the context of the DRC, the term "new IDP" refers to someone who has been displaced for less than one year, whereas the term "old IDP" refers to someone who has been displaced for more than two years. The evaluation team found that those who had been displaced for 1 to 3 months were in a much higher state of vulnerability than those who reported being displaced over the previous 10 to 12 months.
10. Despite these variations, evaluation team members expressed some concern that there was an operational tendency within the PRRO to plan for and respond to the needs of IDPs as if they were one homogeneous group. Based on the wide range of vulnerability levels found in the IDP populations visited, the team felt that greater emphasis needed to be placed on prioritizing the relief needs of more recently displaced IDPs. In making this suggestion, the team was inspired by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report "Guiding Principles for Internal Displacement", which calls for an acknowledgement that IDPs have different needs that evolve over time and require continuous monitoring and assessment. An adequate strategy for IDPs must differentiate assistance modalities based on an objective analysis of differing needs for food aid, and in this way enhance targeting effectiveness.

² Source: Provincial Health Inspectorate.



Recommendations

In order to strengthen the strategic aspects of WFP's IDP assistance, WFP should develop more clearly articulated and differentiated strategies for assessing and addressing the needs of IDPs, based on the different phases and circumstances of their displacement. This effort should include:

- ⇒ prioritizing the provision of full rations to IDPs during the first three months of their displacement;
- ⇒ systematically assessing their needs at regular intervals after the initial 90 days to determine if a continuation of relief aid is needed or if their coping capacities are sufficiently well developed for WFP to move on to more targeted approaches, including food for work (FFW) and food for training (FFT); and
- ⇒ if necessary, mixing relief and FFW entitlements within the same sites based on differing household vulnerability levels.

TARGETING AND BENEFICIARY SELECTION

11. Food aid needs assessment is complicated by the fact that the Government of the DRC does not officially use the term "IDP". The official term is "war displaced", and this is applied mostly in relation to people displaced as a result of the 1998 uprising. OCHA estimates that there are some 3.5 million "war displaced" in the DRC, all of whom are potential beneficiaries of WFP food aid.
12. In government-controlled areas, eligibility for WFP rations is determined by inclusion on lists drawn up by the General Committee for Reinsertion (*Commission générale de réinsertion*). Once a person has been included on this government registration list, he/she is qualified to receive humanitarian assistance, regardless of how long ago the initial displacement lasted or what his/her current social and economic status is. Outside of government-controlled areas, eligibility is determined by WFP's operational partners. In both cases, WFP verifies eligibility lists, which is a daunting task given that the "non-displaced population" is often as poor as the displaced population.
13. Throughout the country, there are no clear needs-based eligibility criteria used for determining inclusion and exclusion from WFP beneficiary lists, and inclusion and exclusion errors are of concern. Interviews at all three major sites within government-controlled areas revealed that many IDPs considered the government registration system discriminatory and that people who were not IDPs were appearing on the lists while needy cases were being passed over. Some of the criteria used for determining eligibility went beyond simple displacement to include factors that were not wholly appropriate for a WFP-assisted operation (e.g., Congolese nationality and "good moral character"). It was also reported that security factors were sometimes used as an exclusion factor.
14. The evaluation team noted a need for increased transparency, as there was little evidence at the sites visited of any oral announcements made or lists posted giving the names of eligible beneficiaries. Also, community and IDP representatives, such as traditional leaders or humanitarian committee representatives, were not involved enough in selecting beneficiaries or cross-checking beneficiary lists with WFP operational partners.
15. In non-government-controlled areas, significant numbers of vulnerable IDPs had been excluded from assistance. In the Kivus, for example, the local authorities do not authorize general food distributions in urban or peri-urban areas, in spite of the very precarious



situation among the IDPs and the resident populations in Bukavu. Apart from the period of the volcano eruption, the food aid needs of these excluded populations are not systematically assessed. However, urban and peri-urban populations are targeted through nutrition centres, and family rations are distributed to families with malnourished children. The evaluation team was also concerned that as a result of the various restrictions on United Nations staff movement imposed by the United Nations security system, many needy IDPs were effectively out of reach, and as such also excluded.

Recommendations

- ⇒ Establish clear needs-based criteria for assessing IDP food needs.
- ⇒ Establish formal selection committees for drawing up beneficiary lists. Ideally, such committees should comprise representatives of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), WFP operational partners, three representatives from the IDP humanitarian aid committees, a government representative where appropriate and a WFP representative.

GENDER

16. The evaluation team found that the WFP operation had generally helped women IDPs to cope better with the circumstances of their displacement. As some quotes from the beneficiaries clearly illustrate, many women reported being able to feed their families better as a result of WFP assistance.
17. In the east of the country, some women felt that WFP rations played an important role in helping them avoid having to undertake dangerous day trips to rural areas to cultivate land. Examples of alternative occupations included the pursuit of petty trading opportunities and day labouring.
18. The current protracted emergency situation has tended to overshadow full implementation of WFP's new Enhanced Commitments to Women. Very little gender information is currently being provided by operational partners, and certain sub-offices do not have gender focal points.

Recommendation

- ⇒ Undertake training in the Enhanced Commitments to Women with WFP operational partners.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

19. There is not an adequate system in place for monitoring outcomes among beneficiaries, and many staff expressed concern that insecurity in many places made it very difficult to undertake these types of activities. The more recent use of the logical framework for the PRRO, although a positive step forward, had not resulted in more systematic collection, analysis and reporting of monitoring data. There remained, therefore, a tendency to focus on tonnages delivered. Few of the monitoring reports reviewed by the evaluation team addressed the actual outcomes for beneficiaries as a result of WFP assistance.



ENHANCED HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY AMONG IDP POPULATIONS

20. In the absence of quantitative survey work and baselines for measuring the effects of food aid on beneficiaries, the evaluation team relied on testimony from the beneficiaries themselves and, where possible, on the use of simple comparison groups.
21. In all the sites visited, the team was able to confirm the short-term positive effects food aid played for those IDPs who received rations. These effects were most pronounced where household food consumption levels were stabilized—a precursor to maintaining good nutrition. This success is especially important when seen against the backdrop of serious declines in household food security and nutritional status within the country generally. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that in 2001, 60 percent of the population in the DRC was food insecure. Acute malnutrition rates in one of the worst affected crisis areas, such as in North and South Kivu for example, oscillated between 10 and 30 percent in 2002.
22. Against this backdrop, IDP populations assisted by WFP consistently reported eating more frequently than non-assisted IDP populations. All IDPs interviewed declared eating at least once a day when benefiting from WFP rations, be they general, FFW or FFT rations. Many of these indicated eating twice a day, and a small minority up to three times a day. In cases where WFP assistance had been phased out, IDPs generally ate only once a day.
23. Table 1 summarizes the results at one FFW site, showing how the provision of WFP assistance allowed women to eat better than those who were not assisted.

Six-person family	Number of meals per day	Meal quantity per day	Meal quality	Food security	Comment
WFP-assisted women	>2	2 kg of meal, enough vegetables from garden	Morning: porridge Evening: maize porridge with or without cassava, vegetables and small fry with oil and salt	Has stocks from WFP rations and harvest	May even be able to add some fish
Women not assisted by WFP (comparison group)	1 late meal (10 p.m.)	1.2 kg meal, 20 g small fry, vegetable, no oil or salt	Cassava paste, vegetable, small fry (rarely), no oil	No stocks, survives from day to day	Harvests wild greens and performs other activities such as brewing beer and selling bananas

24. The following are some typical comments received from IDPs on the effects of food aid:
- WFP is here, it's the father of our tummies! (Mangina, North Kivu)
 - WFP has arrived, our hunger is over and our children will not die. (Equateur)
 - We survive thanks to this maize meal (from WFP) but we are not used to eating maize paste and we are obliged to, otherwise we will die from hunger. (Mangina, North Kivu)



- Rations from WFP allow us to have food stocks and to send the children to school. (Likasi, Lubumbashi)
- We are happy and receive maize meal, oil and beans. This keeps our children from falling ill. (Therapeutic feeding centre, Lwiro)
- WFP rations help us because we can eat at least twice a day. Do not forget us! (Fikupa, Lubumbashi)
- We thank WFP for repairing the road up to here and Ciherano. Since August 2002, I found that this road which hired people is a good thing because everyone is poor, and the work undertaken allows people to have food until they can harvest [their crops]. (Lurhala, South Kivu)

NUTRITION

25. The PRRO has prioritized the food needs of the many therapeutic feeding centres (TFCs) that target not only IDPs but also local populations. The team found quantitative evidence that WFP assistance to these centres was having positive nutritional effects. For example, data analysed from TFCs in Kinshasa showed that WFP-supported centres had an average recovery rate of 93 percent as compared with an 85-percent average rate for those centres not assisted by WFP. In order to maintain these positive nutritional results, the team supported the PRRO's current approach of prioritizing the food needs of these centres before meeting those of other food distribution channels. The team noted that in Kinshasa, malnutrition rates in the WFP-assisted IDP camps were lower than those among the surrounding non-assisted populations.
26. More positive nutritional effects were found at WFP-assisted centres where targeted feeding had been combined since 2002 with preventive and educational activities using FFW and FFT and launched in collaboration with FAO. The data in Table 2 demonstrate the effects on nutrition indicators at two WFP-assisted feeding centres before and after the introduction of this programmatic change. One of the major causes of death at many TFCs visited was HIV related.

TABLE 2: NUTRITIONAL INDICATORS AT TWO WFP-ASSISTED TFCs				
Indicator	TFC Lwiro		TFC Daco	
	2002	2003	2002	2003
Recovery rate (%)	75	95	97	98
Mortality rate (%)	9	3	1.6	1.4
Relapse rate (%)	2	1	4	3
Drop-out rate (%)	11.4	0.4	1.6	0.8

RECOVERY ISSUES

27. Although there is a tendency to equate the PRRO's recovery objectives with implementation of FFW and FFT activities, even the provision of general relief food rations in the DRC context helps to build up household food security, thereby building up greater resilience to shocks and laying the foundations for recovery. In situations of continuous and multiple displacements, these effects were considered critical.



28. WFP food rations are first typically used to meet immediate food consumption needs. The amount actually used for this purpose was found to vary enormously among IDPs. In the case of longer-term IDPs, the amount preserved for immediate household food consumption was often as low as one third. In more vulnerable situations, the amount retained for immediate consumption increased to two thirds, and at times more, for example in Ituri. This was consistent with the general finding that in the DRC context, self-reliance levels, although still low, were highest among those longer-term IDPs located within government-controlled areas.
29. IDPs living outside of camp situations and lodged with host families or relatives particularly valued the food rations. The rations allowed them to make contributions to the host table, and thus feel better integrated into their new communities.
30. This suggests that a good portion of WFP assistance is effectively used to support barter and exchange. Many IDPs reported purchasing essentials such as soap with the funds obtained; the purchase of complementary and less expensive food items was also reported. In a country where the banking system does not function properly, WFP rations were found to play a role in helping IDPs build up working capital reserves from which they could meet more medium-term household needs such as school fees, medical costs and shelter. Within high-risk areas, this latter aspect was found to offer women a minimum level of security and stability, which might otherwise have been absent. In some cases, the WFP rations better enabled families to preserve and protect a larger portion of their seeds for planting the next season. In the above ways, WFP assistance serves to protect and foster the livelihoods of at-risk IDP families, and in this sense support the PRRO's recovery objectives.
31. The team visited a FFW site in Fikupa, which was considered best practice in successfully helping to build food-security assets. This success was largely the result of the highly favourable local environment, which boasted very good soil and generous government land grants for IDPs. An integrated approach, combining training, education and solid implementing partner capacity, was the main ingredient in the Fikupa site's success.
32. Not all of these favourable conditions were present at other FFW sites visited, and the team had difficulty seeing the positive effects of FFW at all sites. At one site, the IDP population was being assisted through a reforestation intervention. However, the intervention was not well targeted given that the IDPs there had already developed adequate levels of self-sufficiency and no longer required food aid.
33. Evidence was found that the PRRO was effectively seizing upon recovery opportunities through small micro-projects, including seed-protection initiatives jointly with FAO, support to associations of women porters and nutritional education, which at some centres was already found to be having positive effects.
34. In the case of FFW and FFT interventions, WFP-assisted activities were most likely to be successful in rebuilding household food security when the following enabling conditions were in place:
 - availability of land for IDPs to cultivate;
 - access to tools and seeds;
 - capacity among IDPs to undertake and support training;



- an adequate sense of security among the target IDP population assisted; and
- proximity to other social infrastructure such as health centres, schools, water points, and markets.

CONCLUSIONS

35. WFP has succeeded in bringing about strengthened household food security and better nutrition for hundreds of thousands of IDPs fortunate enough to have received assistance. However, it has not been possible to ensure continued and regular assistance to many beneficiaries, mainly because of insecurity but also owing to pipeline breaks and logistical constraints.
36. The strategies pursued under the PRRO were only partially adapted and only partially relevant to the needs of IDPs, given the complexity of the situation and the enormous range of IDP needs. This latter issue and weaknesses in the food needs assessment process must be tackled urgently if improved approaches are to materialize on the ground.
37. When effectively combined with other inputs, WFP food aid has shown a capacity to respond to some of the longer-term needs of beneficiary populations through development interventions. The pre-conditions for this tend to be site specific, and could not readily be replicated in most typical situations of displacement found in the DRC.
38. The IDPs interviewed were quick to point to the positive role food aid played not only in meeting their immediate food consumption needs but also in strengthening their integration into new households and communities and by helping them to build up short-term assets, which increased their choices. This effect was seen across the entire PRRO and was not unique to activities under the recovery component. The main strategic concern now is to focus on improving targeting effectiveness.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FFT	food for training
FFW	food for work
IDP	internally displaced person
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OEDE	Office of Evaluation
TFC	therapeutic feeding centre

