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**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE EVALUATION OF
THE WEST AFRICA COASTAL REGIONAL
PROTRACTED RELIEF AND RECOVERY
OPERATIONS, IN GUINEA, LIBERIA AND
SIERRA LEONE (PRROs 10064.0, 10064.1 and
10064.2)**

NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

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

Director, Office of Evaluation (OEDE): Mr K. Tuinenburg tel.: 066513-2252

Evaluation Officer, OEDE: Mr R. Sirois tel.: 066513-2223

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Supervisor, Meeting Servicing and Distribution Unit (tel.: 066513-2328).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WFP relief interventions have significantly contributed to saving lives and restoring, maintaining and improving the food security and nutritional situation of beneficiaries. WFP has also shown considerable ingenuity in rapidly responding to logistic challenges posed by the ever-changing and complex security situation.

Recovery interventions have been less successful in terms of enabling affected communities to become more self-supporting over the long-term. Criteria to signal the shift from relief to recovery assistance are lacking. Project documents are poor in defining the specific needs of affected populations and how the proposed interventions would address them. Specifically, recovery activities do little to address the main food-security constraints. The small number of programme staff with the required qualifications to implement technically complex recovery activities, often compounded with the poor technical and operational capacity of implementing partners, has had a negative impact on overall implementation and monitoring of such activities.

Appropriate guidelines and tools are urgently required to enable field staff to deal with issues of protection and abuse.

Efficiency has improved overall and transport costs have improved considerably. Landside transport, storage and handling costs have declined as a proportion of the total budget, resource mobilization has improved and pipeline management has been strengthened. Distribution of general food rations has exceeded the actual number of food recipients in some refugee camps, however. This can be attributed partly to poor targeting criteria and the limited room that WFP has with regard to agreeing on refugee figures with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, following registration.

The regional approach has increased flexibility in pipeline management, enabling expansion or contraction of food deliveries in light of changing needs. Some regional standards have been introduced, but other opportunities to introduce regional standardization have been overlooked. Decentralization of the regional bureau has strengthened the technical support available to country offices and increased accessibility to local donor representatives. Inter-country communications have been generally weak, however.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of the information and recommendations in the document “Summary Report of the Evaluation of the West Africa Coastal Regional PRROs in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (PRROs 10064.0, 10064.1 and 10064.2)” (WFP/EB.3/2004/6-C).

* 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.



OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

1. The crisis in coastal West Africa began in December 1989 with an incursion into northern Liberia by the National Patriotic Front; neighbouring countries were soon drawn into the conflict. In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a Sierra Leonean resistance movement allegedly affiliated with armed factions in Liberia, launched attacks against Sierra Leone Government forces. In late 2000, Sierra Leonean rebels made a series of major military incursions through territorial protrusions into Guinea's "parrot's beak" or "*languette*", which displaced local communities along with refugees. Ongoing conflict in Liberia has fuelled much of the regional instability. President Charles Taylor was forced to step down in August 2003 and a National Transitional Government was created in October of that year. The United Nations Security Council established a multinational peace-keeping force to help maintain peace and establish order in the country.
2. The regional crisis has followed a cyclical pattern of violence, giving way to efforts to establish ceasefires under fragile peace agreements. Each round of fighting has been accompanied by atrocities against civilians including mass killings, mutilations, female and male rape, forced abductions, indiscriminate destruction and looting.
3. A major feature of the crisis has been the large-scale displacement of civilians. From the beginning of the Liberian conflict, the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone pursued a liberal open-door policy in providing asylum to refugees. In Liberia, it is estimated that between 700,000 and 800,000 people sought refuge in neighbouring countries; up to 1 million others have been displaced internally, mostly to Monrovia. In Sierra Leone, an estimated 1.5 million people abandoned their homes. The political instability in Côte d'Ivoire since 2002 has displaced more than 1 million people. With the establishment of peace in Sierra Leone in 2002, most refugees have been repatriated. Guinea and Sierra Leone continue to host an estimated 200,000 refugees from Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.
4. By mid-2004, the region was generally calm, but tense. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire remained volatile following the breakdown of the 2003 Marcoussis-Linas peace accord and the withdrawal of opposition parties from the Government of National Reconciliation.¹

OVERVIEW OF WFP ASSISTANCE

5. Assistance to the region began in 1990, with a series of short-term country-specific emergency operations (EMOPs). The operations have been challenging because of continuing insecurity, including attacks on humanitarian staff. The unpredictability of population movements, including frequent cross-border movements, required constant adjustments of food-delivery plans and distributions, which made the operation increasingly complex. Consequently, the regional approach was adopted early on to increase flexibility in terms of programming and logistics.

¹ A review of the linkages between the West Africa Coastal regional PRROs and Côte d'Ivoire regional EMOPs was originally intended for inclusion in this evaluation. Unfortunately, the arrival of the mission in Abidjan in late March 2004 coincided with major anti-Government demonstrations and political turmoil, which made field visits impossible. This part of the terms of reference was therefore dropped.



6. The rationale for a regional approach was to facilitate the planning of assistance. A single overall budget was expected to increase flexibility and allow rapid regional and local decision making in resource allocation and reallocation, according to cross-boarder population movements. The West Africa Coastal operation has included assistance for internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees and war-affected host populations.
7. Until the mid-1990s, the main focus of WFP assistance was on free food distribution; the prevailing security situation severely restricted opportunities to undertake meaningful recovery activities. In 1996, WFP evaluated its experience with the Liberian regional operation. The evaluation recommended phasing down general food distributions and strengthening targeted recovery activities. Consequently, general food distributions were progressively replaced by more targeted food interventions. The upsurge in violence in 2000 and 2001, which continued in Liberia into summer 2003, curtailed the expansion of recovery activities and emphasis switched once again to the provision of relief assistance. Improved stability in Guinea and Sierra Leone after 2002 created the opportunity to shift emphasis back to recovery strategies in those countries. In 2003 and 2004, however, general food distributions still accounted for 60 percent of WFP commodities.
8. In late 2003, coordination of the regional protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) and the Côte d'Ivoire regional EMOP was transferred from the West Africa Regional Bureau (ODD) in Dakar to Regional Humanitarian Coordination and Support Office (RHCSO), WFP's sub-regional coordination office in Abidjan. At the country level, the WFP country representatives have national responsibility for coordinating and implementing the respective relief and recovery activities.
9. Food aid operations in the region have been supported by a series of special operations (SOs) to provide enhanced logistic capacity to the humanitarian community.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

10. The overall terms of reference for the evaluation were to:
 - evaluate the PRRO effectiveness;²
 - examine the efficiency³ of implementation; and
 - establish the advantages and disadvantages of the regional approach.

EFFECTIVENESS

Project Formulation

11. In 2003, three phases of the regional PRROs⁴ were active with food distributions in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone⁵. Each operation lasted for one year and represented the largest and most prolonged operations in West Africa, covering 750,000 beneficiaries. In

² Effectiveness: "The extent to which the operation's objectives were achieved, or expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance".

³ Efficiency: "A measure of how economical inputs are converted to outputs".

⁴ PRROs 10064.0, 10064.1 and 10064.2. Commodity Movement Processing and Analysis System (COMPAS) reports, although not the 2004 Standardized Project Report, indicate that small amounts of food were also distributed under the previous PRRO 06271.0 in 2003.

⁵ PRRO 10064.1 also included 5,000 mt for 25,600 beneficiaries in Côte d'Ivoire out of a total 88,570 mt for the region. In fact, only 3,300 beneficiaries in Côte d'Ivoire received food assistance in 2003.



2003, the overall cost increased to US\$75 million and tonnage increased to 124,000 mt because of the latest Liberia crisis. All phases had the same operational purpose: to save lives by providing relief assistance and to contribute to long-term recovery prospects.

12. Project documentation has been weak in defining the specific needs of affected populations and how the proposed interventions would address them. Specific description of objectives for each activity, implementation strategies, performance indicators and expected results have all been lacking. Only PRRO 10064.2 included a logical framework analysis, prepared afterwards, which served more to justify the activities rather than to guide project design and implementation.⁶

Recommendation

- Improve PRRO formats to ensure stronger problem analysis, definition of food aid recipient needs and linkages to document objectives, and specific activities to achieve these objectives. Logical frameworks, including implementation strategies, performance indicators and expected results for each proposed activity, should be integral to project formulation.

Implementation

13. The effectiveness of WFP interventions depends on the effectiveness of implementing partners (IPs). After years of civil conflict, Government institutional capacity in the region is extremely weak. Although WFP coordinates its activities with the appropriate government counterparts, actual implementation⁷ is carried out by international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). WFP contributes to meeting IP costs through the landside transport, storage and handling (LTSH) budget, at an agreed fixed rate per ton.⁸ IPs are expected to provide the required non-food and technical inputs such as shelter, water and sanitation items, cooking kits, seeds, tools and technical backstopping from their own resources. In fact, most IPs are simply executing agents carrying out tasks on behalf of WFP. In practice, this often means that IPs approach the same donors that fund WFP activities for additional resources to support implementation. An ongoing review of LTSH rates may go some way to resolving this issue.
14. IPs are usually chosen on the basis of their available staff resources, budget and available logistics capacity. The situation is also affected by the fact that the pool of available NGOs in the region to implement WFP activities is extremely limited. There has been little prior assessment of the technical, strategic and operational capacities of IPs. This has had negative consequences for the effectiveness of many WFP interventions. In 2002 and 2003, WFP undertook a technical review of its IPs in Sierra Leone, which revealed serious weaknesses in the initial selection process, and reduced the number of IPs from 40 to 16. In December 2003, WFP curtailed supplementary feeding activities in Liberia when a technical review found that most IP staff were not sufficiently qualified, international standards were not being respected and appropriate equipment had not been provided by the partner. The technical criteria

⁶ Country offices have prepared logical frameworks to guide the implementation of specific activities within each country.

⁷ In refugee camps in Guinea and Liberia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has responsibility for distributing food commodities, working through jointly-chosen NGO implementing partners. In March 2003, WFP assumed full responsibility for distributing food commodities to refugees in Sierra Leone as one of the pilot test projects recommended in the 2002 WFP/UNHCR memorandum of understanding.

⁸ WFP uses a weighted average LTSH cost per mt in establishing the budget of the PRRO. For PRRO 10064.2, the LTSH rates were US\$95 for Liberia, US\$108 for Sierra Leone and US\$117 for Guinea.



developed for the Sierra Leone review, and the rapid and simple tools developed by the Liberia nutrition unit, are good initiatives and steps in the right direction.

Recommendation

- Improve the assessment of the technical capacity of IPs through annual reviews, including technical assessment of the proposal and assessment of the IP's technical ability to effectively implement the proposal.

Relief Component

15. Relief activities were defined as general food distribution, mainly for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in camps and camp-based curative feeding, including therapeutic, supplementary and preventive mother-and-child health (MCH) feeding.
16. WFP has rapidly responded to logistic challenges posed by the ever-changing security situation. Following fighting in Monrovia in 2003, much of which occurred around the port, port rehabilitation by WFP through an SO began immediately upon the return of international staff to Monrovia in the latter half of 2003. The port was soon operational again.
17. General food distributions, combined with curative feeding programmes, have significantly contributed to saving lives and restoring, maintaining and improving food security and nutritional status of beneficiaries, especially children under 5 and pregnant and lactating women. Under-5 mortality rates among camp populations are low, stable and better than among the host population in general. The prevalence of wasting in camps is lower or similar to that of the surrounding host population.⁹
18. Some caveats should be borne in mind. There are insufficient data to confidently attribute avoiding deaths and reducing malnutrition solely to the provision of food aid. The effectiveness of curative feeding interventions, where there is a direct and clear relationship between the intervention and reduced malnutrition, is related to the effectiveness of medical NGOs implementing the programmes. The success of curative feeding may have more to do with the medical care and medicines provided by NGOs than with the provision of food commodities.
19. As part of the strategy to bridge the disparities in the social and economic situation of refugees and host communities, women from surrounding villages are encouraged to use the curative feeding services provided to camp inhabitants. Because the local health infrastructure is weak, local communities greatly appreciate this access and have largely become reliant on the camp facilities. Unfortunately, governments have already shown that they are unable to maintain a similar level of services for local communities once the camps close, unless supported by additional development interventions.

⁹ The prevalence of wasting in camps has fluctuated along with new influxes of displaced people, who typically suffer from malnutrition upon arrival.



Recommendation

- Strengthen support to beneficiaries, by establishing, through development assistance, sustainable, integrated, community-based MCH programmes within communities surrounding camps, to replace curative feeding in-camp programmes.

Recovery Component

20. Recovery activities, referred to in the documentation as "safety nets", include: emergency school feeding; food for training; food for work; food for agriculture; seed protection; and institutional feeding of vulnerable groups.¹⁰
21. Designing and implementing effective recovery activities have been the greatest challenges for the PRRO category; this operation is no exception. There are no established criteria to signal when the shift from relief assistance to recovery interventions should take place. In terms of contributing to long-term recovery prospects, there is little indication that recovery activities have played a significant role in enabling communities to become more self-supporting.
22. The formulation of recovery activities, and their implementation, does not appear to have taken into account the major food security constraints faced by the target population, as identified by the various studies undertaken in the region, including vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM). The available normative guidance material provides little assistance in formulating better activities.
23. There has been limited analysis of the sustainability of food-supported activities. In some cases for example, the same communities have continued to receive food-for-work support for farm rehabilitation year after year while undertaking the same rehabilitation schemes. Studies have not been undertaken to determine the effectiveness of WFP interventions in enabling beneficiaries to become more self-reliant. For example, seed protection programmes, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP, aim to prevent farmers from consuming their seed stocks.¹¹ Neither WFP nor FAO, however, is able to confirm that seed protection programmes actually resulted in increased harvests by beneficiary farmers or whether beneficiary farmers were now self-supporting.

¹⁰ These activities also include support for returnees and for disarmament and reintegration programmes, although these were often not described in the PRRO documentation.

¹¹ Seed protection represents one of the few food-aid interventions that provides food assistance during the lean season during a period of high food insecurity.



Recommendations

- Improve normative guidelines for recovery activities and include issues such as criteria to signal the transition from relief to recovery, appropriateness of proposed activities, sustainability and effectiveness.
- Address the causes of short-term food insecurity in recovery activities more directly and include clear exit strategies, either through phase-out of food assistance when self-reliance has been achieved or phase-over to other types of assistance when further assistance is still required.
- Introduce ex-post monitoring in recovery activities to help establish the effectiveness of food assistance and lessons learned.

24. Planned interventions have often taken little account of the PRRO project cycle, especially the duration of the operation. For example, the period covered by emergency school feeding interventions does not correspond with the entire academic year.

Recommendation

- Formulate recovery activities and ensure their complete implementation within the life of the operation.

25. High turnover of international staff has hampered overall implementation. Staff gaps have required ad hoc placements, with little warning or preparation for the staff members who are suddenly allocated additional responsibilities. The lack of continuity of staff has also limited the development of an institutional memory within country offices. Institutional memory has been further impeded by the lack of documentation of experiences or preparation of handover notes to guide newcomers, and the generally weak management of filing systems.

Recommendation

- Strengthen institutional memory by ensuring that handover and annual country briefing notes by country directors, deputy country directors and technical focal points are comprehensive and readily available to new staff and visiting missions. Technical focal points should ensure that operational decisions are properly documented and country office files, including electronic files, are properly maintained.

26. The ability of country offices to ensure sound project formulation and implementation, and to undertake effective monitoring, is constrained by the restricted number of technically-knowledgeable staff. This is compounded by the limited technical support available from both ODD and RHCSO. Country office technical focal points have been appointed with little or no prior expertise in the technical areas. Despite the restricted availability of technical support, each country office has tried to implement the full range of recovery activities. The range of recovery activities supported in each country exceeds technical capacity.

27. It has been particularly difficult to establish effective food-for-work programmes in the region, in part because of social attitudes towards working for food, and also because of the lack of IPs with appropriate technical expertise and capacity for implementation. Food-for-training interventions have also proved difficult to implement.



Recommendation

- Reduce the range of recovery activities supported in each country, to focus limited available in-country technical expertise on a fewer number of activities. Food for work and food for training are the most obvious candidates for elimination.

28. In terms of overall level of resources and number of beneficiaries, emergency school feeding is the major recovery activity, and has expanded significantly in both Guinea and Liberia throughout 2003 and 2004. In Guinea, this expansion reflects the decision to give greater emphasis to host communities affected by the presence of internally displaced populations and address the imbalance between assistance provided. The rapid expansion of emergency school feeding in this period is particularly remarkable. School feeding hardly existed in Liberia in 2002, was re-launched in November 2003 and was reaching 240,000 pupils by March 2004. There has been little clarity however regarding the overall objectives of emergency school feeding or how the activities supported under the PRRO will phase out or phase over to other types of assistance.

Recommendation

- Finalize existing draft guidelines for emergency school feeding to provide sufficient guidance for field staff implementing such activities.

Security Considerations and Protection Issues

29. Security considerations have dominated many operational decisions. The security considerations underlying operational decisions have rarely been properly documented, however; current programme staff often has little understanding of the reasons for prevailing operational practices. For example, there have been continual requests from beneficiaries, governments, NGOs, IPs, other United Nations agencies, donors and even WFP staff to resume the distribution of rice. In the mid-1990s, however, a decision was made to replace rice with less valuable bulgur wheat to help prevent civilian beneficiaries from being harassed by fighters following food distributions and reduce the potential for diversion.
30. WFP has given increased attention to the protection concerns of women, in line with its Enhanced Commitments to Women. Women and girls who are displaced or in conflict situations face particular risks. Protection issues in the region came to international attention in 2002 with the publication of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)/Save the Children Fund (SCF) report on sexual and gender-based violence by humanitarian staff in refugee and IDP camps.¹²
31. UNHCR leads the prevention of sexual and other abuse in refugee camps and offers refugee women a safe and non-stigmatizing means to report abuse cases. The situation is less clear for displaced people however, for whom no United Nations agency has a clear protection mandate. Reporting mechanisms are weak or non-existent.

¹² UNHCR and SCF-UK (2002). Note for implementing and operational partners, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: the Experience of Refugee Children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone*, based on initial findings and recommendations from an assessment mission, 22 October to 30 November 2001 and February 2002.



32. WFP offices in the region have instituted a number of formal measures to address sexual abuse, including (i) signature of the joint United Nations Code of Conduct by all staff, (ii) adoption of a zero-tolerance policy, under which any staff member violating the code faces immediate dismissal, (iii) sensitization training for all staff, (iv) hiring additional women staff, particularly as food monitors, (v) support for camp-sensitization campaigns covering human rights issues, including abuse, (vi) letters of understanding with IPs that require systems to prevent staff use of humanitarian assistance for sexual exploitation or other forms of abuse and (vii) formulation of action plans by each country office to combat sexual harassment and abuse, often in conjunction with the other United Nations agencies present in the country.
33. The impact of these measures is uncertain. For example, few programme staff were aware of the specifics of the relevant country office action plan to combat sexual harassment and abuse; some stated they had not even seen it. As an organization, WFP has done little to develop appropriate tools and guidelines to enable field staff, especially national food monitors, to appropriately deal with protection issues encountered during their work. International staff stated that they lacked a clear mandate, appropriate tools and clear guidance to cope with protection issues in the field.

Recommendation

- Design appropriate tools to enable WFP staff to deal effectively with protection issues. There should be clear guidelines on reporting structures so that every staff member knows to whom they should report issues of abuse, and what actions can be expected.

EFFICIENCY OF IMPLEMENTATION

34. At 28 percent of the commodity cost, the current 2004 PRRO direct support cost (DSC) is high when compared with other PRROs. For all protracted relief and recovery operations approved between 1996 and 2000, DSC costs averaged 19 percent of total commodity costs for operations in least developed countries, and 22 percent for operations in countries with a low United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index.¹³ But when compared with similar operations where security considerations put an additional burden on the budget, such as in the Great Lakes region and Angola, it is relatively low. The DSC of the 2001–2003 PRRO for the Great Lakes region was estimated at 36 percent of the commodity cost, while the current 2004 Angola PRRO DSC is 39 percent.
35. The level of DSC requirements should diminish once the operation is on-going and staff and mechanisms are in place; this usually corresponds with a greater shift from relief to recovery. Recovery interventions, as compared to relief interventions, typically require less food tonnage in proportion to the number of food aid recipients. Recovery interventions also require more technical support from WFP programme staff, and therefore greater DSC expenditure per ton. There is a strong argument for increased DSC requirements during the shift towards recovery, especially when compounded with high security-related expenditures. PRRO operations are caught in an inextricable situation because DSC requirements are expected to decrease during the life of the operation.

¹³ "Review of Emergency and Protracted Relief and Recovery Budgets to Develop Practical Guidelines for DSC/ODOC Budgeting", WFP, April 2002.



Recommendation

- Revise the formula for establishing DSC in PRROs to ensure that sufficient technical backstopping, and funds to cover overall security expenditures, can be provided to recovery interventions.

36. There have been considerable reductions in transport costs, partly resulting from economies of scale, in spite of increased food assistance requirements. In 2003, total external transport costs increased by only 10 percent, despite the fact that total tonnage of various commodities increased by almost 50 percent. LTSH costs declined as a proportion of the total budget from 22 percent in 2001 to 18 percent two years later.
37. There has been a significant improvement in resource mobilization. The level of contributions, against assessed needs, increased from 85 percent for PRRO 10064.0 to 100 percent for PRRO 10064.1; PRRO 10064.2 was already resourced at 40 percent by February 2004. Although 17 countries have contributed to regional operations since 2001, the United States of America alone has provided more than 50 percent of total resources; the United States and the European Commission have together provided 80 percent.
38. In the West Africa Coastal region, food aid has been the only humanitarian resource with which donors have been generous. One result of this has been that governments and other agencies look to WFP to support activities that are less appropriate than food aid, such as funding the construction of school buildings and health clinics or helping to meet staff salaries. WFP has been under pressure to support other interventions, rather than focusing on activities where food aid could have a better comparative advantage.
39. Pipeline management has been strengthened and there have been few pipeline breaks. The number of regional transshipments from one country in the region to another to overcome pipeline shortfalls was halved between 2002 and 2003. Liberia country calls forward significantly exceeded prevailing distribution rates in the first quarter of 2004, however, with consequent oversupply and some food spoilage at the warehouse, especially of maize meal.
40. Actual food distributions have consistently been fewer than planned. One consequence of this has been the carry over of a considerable amount of commodities at what should have been the end of each protracted operation period. By December 2002, when PRRO 10064.0 should have been completed, only 55 percent of commodities had been distributed as planned. The remaining commodities were distributed in the course of 2003, but this had a knock-on effect on PRRO 10064.1. By December 2003, when this operation should have been completed, 40 percent of commodities remained undistributed. In both cases, the operations were extended through budget revisions. The exception to this is PRRO 10064.2, in which distributions were made in August 2003, before Executive Board approval, to meet high demands of the Liberia crisis.¹⁴
41. A particular feature in 2003 was the utilization of the contingency budget included in PRRO 10064.1, which represented an additional 10 percent of food commodities. The increase was more than the 7,000 mt, looted from Monrovia during the conflict in the summer of 2003.

¹⁴ In-kind donations typically take six to eight months to arrive in the West Africa region. WFP utilized funds from the Immediate Response Account (IRA) through PRRO 10064.2 in the summer of 2003 to speed up delivery and availability of food aid in the region.



42. The most obvious example of poor efficiency is the persistent difficulties surrounding the establishment of refugee-targeting figures. This has resulted in a tendency to plan food assistance for most refugees, regardless of actual food needs. In addition, the number of UNHCR-registered refugees in camps in Guinea has been substantially higher than the actual number of camp inhabitants.¹⁵ This directly impacts the number of food rations planned for each camp. WFP has been planning food distributions for a greater number of refugees than required, not only on the basis of food needs, but also based on the actual number of camp inhabitants.
43. General food distributions in Liberia have not been well targeted according to need. Each person in officially recognized camps for displaced people receives a free full food ration. Many displaced people live in other types of accommodation however, often precariously and without benefit of humanitarian assistance. Although their living conditions are usually more insecure than the inhabitants of the formal camps for IDPs, they do not receive regular food assistance. Many camp inhabitants have been receiving free food rations over an extended period, so that the ration is now perceived as an entitlement, irrespective of actual need. In Liberia, a high proportion of the maize meal distributed through the general food distribution in 2004 has been sold by beneficiaries. The money is often used to buy rice, but at a rate of 1.5–2 kg for 50 kg of maize meal. Variations in nutrition rates among beneficiaries suggest that most beneficiaries of general food distribution are not reliant on WFP relief assistance to meet their nutrition needs. There is a lack of indicators to support this argument, however.
44. Despite the 2002 WFP/UNHCR memorandum of understanding (MOU) stressing that refugee numbers should be jointly assessed, WFP has little room for manoeuvre in negotiating alternative numbers against UNHCR registration figures. UNHCR has also generally resisted WFP and donors' efforts to reduce the general ration provided to camp inhabitants along with increased support to self-reliance programmes in camp areas.

Recommendations

- Pay particular attention to the issue of refugee numbers, registration figures and selection criteria, as well as existing coping strategies, food security and required levels of food assistance, during and following WFP participation in joint-assessment missions.
- Adopt stronger wording during the next revision of the WFP/UNHCR MOU, to emphasize WFP's responsibility in assessing refugee food security and the number of food aid recipients, while recognizing UNHCR's responsibility for refugee registration

45. Recent United Nations security regulations have had significant implications for the work and workload of country office programme staff. In Liberia, the organization of field visits, such as monitoring visits, requires considerable bureaucratic and administrative follow-up by country office staff to obtain all necessary clearances, both from within the country and from United Nations headquarters. As a result, the organization of basic monitoring visits becomes a major event rather than part of routine implementation work. One consequence has been a strong tendency to offload much

¹⁵ Official UNHCR figures showed that Guinea Lainé camp had a registered population of 32,000. Full WFP food rations for that population were provided each month. However, the work of *Médicos sin fronteras-Spain* (MSF-S) community health workers, who carry out regular household visits, suggested that only 22,672 refugees were regular camp residents. Verification exercises, undertaken in Guinea after the visit by the evaluation team, clearly indicated that initial figures were inflated. Registered numbers have since been substantially reduced.



routine monitoring travel to IPs, who are less constrained in terms of travel and accessibility to communities and project sites. IPs often have limited experience with food aid programmes however; overall performance monitoring has suffered.

Recommendation

- Recognize and account for increased costs of implementing operations in areas of high insecurity and adjust direct support cost levels to compensate for increased requirements in staff time and workload.

46. Reporting demands on country office staff, originating from regional offices and bureaux, as well as different divisions at Headquarters, are heavy and there is a tendency to divert programme staff from managing and monitoring operations. A large amount of quantitative data is collected in the field and reported but there is limited comprehensive analysis of the data at the country office level to help guide readjustment or improvement of programmes. As a result, there is little analytical information on the operations' benefits or effectiveness of data-collection and reporting activities. Regular quantitative reviews of the time spent by country offices on meeting reporting requirements would be instructive.

Recommendations

- Ensure more effective reporting by reducing and streamlining WFP internal-reporting procedures, while emphasizing reporting systems that assist programme management. This may mean less data collection and more analysis.
- Regularly review in-country reporting requirements and identify ways to focus discussions on analysis rather than quantitative data and number of reports.

THE REGIONAL APPROACH

47. Regional operations have three main strengths. First, ODD has had increased flexibility in pipeline management, enabling expansion or contraction of food deliveries in the light of changing needs within and between different countries. There are limits to this flexibility however, as discussed below.
48. Second, some regional standards have been introduced, most notably the standardization of rations and the overall three-legged approach, general distributions for those affected by displacement, curative interventions and safety nets. This has increased the ability of ODD to manage the pipeline. Standardization of rations has also helped to prevent displaced people from being attracted across international borders to access preferred commodities.
49. Finally, the decentralization of the regional bureau to Dakar has been beneficial. According to country officers, the level and frequency of technical support provided by the regional technical advisers had increased since decentralization. Locally-based donors are also more comfortable approaching the regional bureau directly with issues or concerns, whereas contact with Headquarters would require a more formal and bureaucratic approach.
50. More could have been achieved through the regional approach, however, and some opportunities to increase standardization across the region have been overlooked.



Recommendation

- Increase standardization for regional PRROs because countries are dealing with similar problems, similar population groups and similar backgrounds. In addition to ration size and basket, consider other aspects for standardization including design of ration cards, food management pro forma and criteria for assessing IPs.

51. Communication linkages have remained largely hierarchical between country offices, RHCSO, ODD and Headquarters. There has been limited structured communication and information-sharing between country offices, even when events in one country have implications for a neighbouring country, such as movement of refugees. Better communication and information-sharing would reinforce the expertise of in-country technical staff and encourage the sharing of experiences and documentation of new procedures or approaches.
52. Country offices have often initiated new operational procedures or guidelines that would be equally applicable in other countries. Only occasionally, and largely accidentally, have these been shared.
53. The availability of technical expertise within country offices is uneven. Greater sharing of the technical expertise could help improve the effectiveness of operations, especially recovery operations.
54. Flexibility in resource management may be more apparent than real. ODD has full control over the allocation of DSC budget between countries, but only limited control over food allocations once country offices have made resource requests.

Recommendations

- Strengthen inter-country communication and dissemination of information and experience through regular meetings of technical focal points.
- Strengthen regional technical support to country offices through a sub-regional technical team of country office experts and through reallocation of DSC for additional technical posts.
- Allocate all food and cash resources to the region rather than individual countries. Country offices should make direct resource requests to ODD, which should decide on food and cash distribution by country.



EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE — REGIONAL WEST AFRICA COASTAL PRROs (10064.0/1/2)		
Recommendations to WFP (March–April 2004)	Action by	Management response and action taken (August 2004)
Effectiveness		
Project formulation		
1. Improve PRRO formats to help guide formulation to ensure stronger problem analysis, definition of food aid recipient needs and linkages to document objectives, as well as specific activity contribution to achieving these objectives. Logical frameworks, including implementation strategies, performance indicators and expected results for each proposed activity, should be integral to project formulation.	Operations Department (ODO)	ODO will be working in collaboration with the Emergencies and Transitions Unit (PSPT) on the improvement and revision of PRRO guidelines as well as the format. The logical framework guidelines are available in the Programme Design Manual (PDM). The current West Africa Coastal PRRO, presented at the October 2004 Executive Board Meeting, is an example of improved results-oriented logical model, constructed from the country-office level logical frameworks. This logical framework captures the alignment to the Strategic Priorities (SPs); the performance indicators are presented clearly for each proposed activity under the SP.
Implementation		
2. Improve the assessment of the technical capacity of implementing partners through annual reviews, including both technical assessment of the proposal and assessment of the implementing partner's technical ability to effectively implement the proposal.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO and ODD	<p>RHCSO took the following actions:</p> <p>It proposed a country office-based approach to assessments, which was adopted in April by ODD, country offices and partners.</p> <p>It mobilized resource persons, together with ODD, to assist country offices with assessments and reviews. In Guinea, a reference to implementing partners' (IPs) performance reviews is made in tripartite agreements between IPs, UNHCR and WFP. In addition, some reviews of IPs' performance have already been conducted; monthly meetings are held and corrective action taken.</p> <p>It organized regional consultations, together with ODD, to help country offices to review the challenges faced during implementation.</p>
Relief component		
3. Strengthen support to mother-and-child health programmes by establishing, through development assistance, sustainable, integrated community-based MCH programmes within communities surrounding camps to replace curative feeding in-camp programmes.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO	RHCSO and country offices, in collaboration with ODD, will aim (i) to ensure availability of resources and staff from the nutrition unit, (ii) to assist country offices to review current activities and (iii) to develop relevant programmes for 2005. In Guinea, some supplementary health services are already provided outside camp settings by IPs. There may be a need, however, for greater Government involvement in existing programmes and greater efforts to identify additional IPs. To that end, there is a joint <i>Action contre la faim</i> /WFP collaborative effort in community-based nutrition in Gueckedou.



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Recovery component		
4. Improve normative guidelines for recovery activities and include issues such as criteria to signal the transition from relief to recovery, appropriateness of proposed activities, sustainability and effectiveness.	ODO	This issue will be addressed as part of the improvement and revision of the PRRO guidelines and formats. The Programme Quality Improvement Initiative, which was begun to implement the PRRO thematic evaluation recommendations, has taken note of this issue. By the end of this year, improved and revised guidelines will be available on-line in the <i>Programme Design Manual</i> (PDM).
5. Address more directly the causes of short-term food insecurity in recovery activities and include clear exit strategies, either through phase-out of food assistance, when self-reliance has been achieved, or phase-over to other types of assistance, when further assistance is still required.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO	A food security/information management group was established within RHCSO to provide technical support and advice on the impact of food-security and recovery/rehabilitation activities in crisis situations for countries covered exclusively by PRROs – Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. RHCSO, in collaboration with the ODD VAM/food security unit, will also monitor effects of the Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia crisis on the food security situation of certain population groups/areas in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Sierra Leone.
6. Introduce ex-post monitoring in recovery activities to help establish the effectiveness of food assistance and draw lessons.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO	This is being done by the food security/information management group of the RHCSO and the VAM/food security unit of ODD.
7. Formulate recovery activities and ensure their complete implementation within the life of the operation.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO	Both RHCSO and ODD have mobilized experts to assist country offices in formulating recovery activities for the next phase of the regional PRRO in 2005.
8. Strengthen institutional memory by ensuring that handover and annual country briefing notes by country directors, deputy country directors and technical focal points are comprehensive and readily available to new staff and visiting missions. Technical focal points should ensure that operational decisions are properly documented and country office files, including electronic files, should be properly maintained.	ODO, in collaboration with RHCSO, ODD and country offices	There are regular publications such as situation reports and documentation related to assessments. Thematic strategies are being posted on the West Africa web page, for easy access. Alternative locations for posting these documents are being identified by the RHCSO food-security/information management group.
9. Reduce the range of recovery activities supported in each country, to focus limited available in-country technical expertise on a smaller number of activities. Food for work and food for training are the most obvious candidates for elimination.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO	RHCSO and ODD have mobilized experts to assist country offices in formulating recovery activities for the next phase of the regional PRRO in 2005.
10. Finalize existing draft guidelines for emergency school feeding to provide sufficient guidance for field staff implementing such activities.	ODO, in collaboration with the School Feeding Service (PSPF)	PSPF has now received the input of UNESCO and intends to complete the guidelines by the end of 2004.



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Recommendations to WFP (March–April 2004)	Action by	Management response and action taken (August 2004)
Security considerations and protection issues		
<p>11. Design appropriate tools to enable WFP staff to deal effectively with protection issues. At the very least, there should be clear guidelines on reporting structures so that every staff member knows to whom they should report issues of abuse, and what actions can be expected.</p>	<p>ODO, in collaboration with PSPT</p>	<p>Steps have been taken by PSPT, RHCSO and the Office of Evaluation (OEDE) to carry out a review mission in September 2004 focusing on beneficiary protection in the West Africa Coastal region from a WFP perspective. The mission is expected to produce practical outputs such as proposals for tools to assist WFP in defining and understanding protection responsibilities, and coping with protection issues in the field. They should provide a basis for improved policy and technical support for WFP operations in conflict areas and for future intervention strategies in West Africa.</p> <p>PSPT is working to further develop the existing training module on international humanitarian law (IHL), which is currently given as part of the emergency response team (ERT) training. The purpose of this is (i) to help articulate WFP's position regarding human rights and IHL, and (ii) to support staff in dealing with IHL-related issues, including protection and humanitarian access.</p> <p>In Guinea, the country office has already conducted orientation sessions for staff, as well as provided instructions on reporting procedures. IPs are bound to the United Nations Code of Conduct through tripartite agreements.</p>
Efficiency of implementation		
<p>12. Revise the formula for establishing DSC in PRROs to ensure that sufficient technical backstopping can be provided to recovery interventions, as well as funds to cover overall security expenditures.</p>	<p>ODO, in collaboration with the Office of Budget (OEDB)</p>	<p>There is an ongoing review exercise, to be led by ODO's programming service, to address the issue of DSC, ODOC and LTSH rates. The business process review is considering moving towards a single cash component rather than three different pots.</p>
<p>13. Pay particular attention to the issue of refugee numbers, registration figures and selection criteria, as well as existing coping strategies, food security and required levels of food assistance, during and following WFP participation in joint-assessment missions.</p>	<p>ODD, in collaboration with RHCSO and country offices</p>	<p>RHCSO and ODD have organized several sub-regional consultations to assist country offices in discussing relevant issues with UNHCR, other partners and donors. In Guinea, there are good working arrangements between WFP and UNHCR in relation to joint census/verification exercises and food security surveys.</p>
<p>14. Adopt stronger wording, during the next revision of the WFP/UNHCR MOU, to emphasize WFP's responsibility in assessing refugee food security and resulting number of food aid recipients, while recognizing UNHCR responsibility over refugee registration.</p>	<p>Division of External Relations (PER), in collaboration with ODO</p>	<p>WFP and UNHCR expect to distribute revised guidelines for joint assessment missions (JAMs), which should help improve the design of food interventions for refugees. Currently, WFP and UNHCR are evaluating the results from five countries where WFP has taken over final food distribution on a pilot basis for 12 months under the terms of the current WFP/UNHCR MOU. Once the evaluations are completed in 2005, UNHCR and WFP will review the results and decide what changes in the existing MOU are desirable. In the light of this recommendation, changes have already been made to letters of understanding (LOU) in Guinea.</p>



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15. Recognize and take into account increased costs incurred by implementing operations in areas of continued high insecurity levels and adjust DSC levels accordingly, to compensate for increased requirements in staff time and workload.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO and ODD	Relevant security-related costs were incorporated into the next phase of the regional PRRO for 2005.
16. Ensure more effective reporting by reducing and streamlining WFP internal reporting procedures, while putting more emphasis on reporting systems that assist programme management. This may mean less data collection and more analysis.	ODD, in collaboration with RHCSO and country offices	<p>In June 2004, ODD and OEDE held a results-based management (RBM) training for country office staff in the region. In addition to discussing ways for country offices to design work plans to analyse their work and evaluate their progress, the training included discussions on reporting and how this approach can facilitate reporting.</p> <p>Last May, RHCSO recruited a public information/donor-relations officer to support country offices in implementing initiatives aimed at streamlining reporting requirements at the field level.</p>
17. Regularly review in-country reporting requirements and identify ways to focus discussions on analysis, rather than quantitative data and number of reports.	Country offices, in collaboration with RHCSO and ODD	As mentioned above, the June 2004 RBM training focused on analysis and utilization of data collection. The public information/donor relations officer is working with ODD to support country offices.
The regional approach		
18. Increase standardization for regional PRROs because countries are dealing with similar problems, similar population groups and similar backgrounds. In addition to ration size and basket, consider other aspects for standardization, including design of ration cards, food management pro forma and criteria for assessing implementing partners.	RHCSO, in collaboration with country offices	RHCSO, through its regional programme adviser and in close collaboration with ODD, has organized sub-regional consultations to support country offices on standardization between the West Africa Coastal and the Regional Côte d'Ivoire PRROs in 2005. RHCSO shared the new guidelines on MOUs with NGOs with country offices as part of this effort. There are also regional strategic meetings in Dakar and Abidjan on implementation matters.
19. Strengthen inter-country communication and dissemination of information and experience through regular meetings of technical focal points.	RHCSO, in collaboration with country offices	RHCSO, with ODD support, has organized sub-regional consultations to help country offices share experiences and encouraged country office technical focal points to use the West Africa web page to disseminate information, including documentation, within and between country offices.



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Recommendations to WFP (March–April 2004)	Action by	Management response and action taken (August 2004)
20. Strengthen regional technical support to country offices through a sub-regional technical team of country office experts and through reallocation of DSC for additional technical posts.	RHCSO, in collaboration with country offices and ODD	Swiss Humanitarian Aid has seconded two staff members to RHCSO, a regional food security adviser and a regional logistics officer; the Norwegian Refugee Council has seconded a database manager; RHCSO has recruited a regional information and communications technology (ICT) officer. These officers are currently assisting country offices to address technical concerns and identify cost-effective ways to overcome these concerns. In addition, a public information officer and regional programme adviser also provide technical support, as required. A platform for the regular provision of this technical support is being formulated in consultation with ODD and will be shared with relevant units at Headquarters.
21. Allocate all food and cash resources to the region, rather than individual countries. Country offices should make direct resource requests to ODD, which should decide on food and cash distribution by country.	ODO, in collaboration with ODD, RHCSO and country offices	Discussions with donors continue to emphasize regional contributions versus earmarked ones. In June, RHCSO recruited a resource manager, who works with the public-information officer in Dakar to make decisions on food and cash resource allocations.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

COMPAS	Commodity Movement Processing and Analysis System
DSC	direct support cost
EMOP	emergency operation
ERT	emergency response training
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ICT	information and communications technology
IDP	internally displaced people
IHL	international humanitarian law
IP	implementing partner
JAM	joint assessment mission
LOU	letter of understanding
LTSH	landside transport, shipping and handling
MCH	mother-and-child health
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MSF-S	<i>Médicos sin fronteras-Spain</i>
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODD	West Africa Regional Bureau
ODO	Operations Department
OEDB	Office of Budget
OEDE	Office of Evaluation
PDM	<i>Programme Design Manual</i>
PER	Division of External Relations
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
PSPF	School Feeding Service
PSPT	Emergencies and Transitions Unit
RBM	results-based management
RHCSO	Regional Humanitarian Coordination and Support Office
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SO	special operation
SP	Strategic Priority
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping

