



Standard Project Report 2015

World Food Programme in Albania, Republic of (AL)

Immediate Response Emergency Operation to Albania floods 2015

Reporting period: 1 January - 31 December 2015

Project Information	
Project Number	200819
Project Category	Single Country IR-EMOP
Overall Planned Beneficiaries	10,000
Planned Beneficiaries in 2015	10,000
Total Beneficiaries in 2015	8,997

Key Project Dates	
Project Approval Date	N/A
Planned Start Date	February 13, 2015
Actual Start Date	N/A
Project End Date	July 03, 2015
Financial Closure Date	January 26, 2016

Approved budget in USD	
Food and Related Costs	N/A
Capacity Dev.t and Augmentation	N/A
Direct Support Costs	181,220
Cash-Based Transfers and Related Costs	1,153,833
Indirect Support Costs	93,454
Total	1,428,507

Commodities	Metric Tonnes
Planned Commodities in 2015	0
Actual Commodities 2015	0
Total Approved Commodities	N/A

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COUNTRY OVERVIEW



Country Background

Albania is an upper middle-income country, with a population of just over 2.8 million and ranked 85 out of 188 on the 2015 Human Development Index. Despite being significantly affected by the international financial crisis in 2008, which led to high unemployment (rising from 12.5 percent in 2008 to 17.3 percent 2015), Albania's strong economic growth since the early 2000's has contributed to the achievement of many of its Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets by 2015. These achievements include combating extreme poverty and gender inequalities, improving aspects of public health in regards to child mortality and maternal health and expanding access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The 2015 Human Development Report estimated that 7.2 percent of the total population are living below the poverty line.

Despite an overall decrease in national poverty level from 25.4 percent in 2002 to 14.3 percent in 2012, disparities in wealth persist between urban and rural development, with both remote mountainous areas and coastal regions in particular lagging behind, where the poverty level has in fact increased since 2008. On average, expenditure on food accounts for a 58.5 percent share of total household expenditure in 2012.

The country is highly vulnerable to climate change impact; with southern and south-eastern regions including the coastal region intersected by rivers, canal systems and lakes, Albania is heavily reliant on its natural water reserves. Soil erosion and deforestation, contribute to higher levels of flooding in the already flood prone valleys to the east of the country.

Summary Of WFP Assistance

Following prolonged heavy rainfall at the end of January, Albania experienced the second worst flooding on record, resulting in the inundation of 17,000 acres of farm land across the country. According to government reports, the floods affected 42,000 people in the south and south east regions of the country. The damage to 2,000 houses by flooding resulted in the evacuation of 4,250 people from their homes, forcing them to seek temporary shelter in relatives' homes. Many of the affected population were small farmers who lost assets, winter reserves of food and livestock, and required support to bridge to the recovery phase.

WFP responded to the needs of the most affected and vulnerable population through an immediate response emergency operation (IR-EMOP 200819), providing one-off cash based transfers to almost 9,000 flood affected people. WFP deployed the emergency assessment multifunction team to conduct an intersectoral assessment. The assessment mission concluded that the immediate food needs of the affected households were covered by the food aid intervention of the Red Cross and other volunteer donations for two months. However the mission found that food access for the most vulnerable would remain a serious issue: returning land to a productive state or replenishing livestock would not be possible in the short term, leaving a food gap for those most affected until alternative sources of income could be generated.

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	261	261	522
Children (5-18 years)	1,098	1,098	2,196
Adults (18 years plus)	3,131	3,148	6,279
Total number of beneficiaries in 2015	4,490	4,507	8,997

OPERATIONAL SPR

Operational Objectives and Relevance

Following a request from the Government of Albania through the UNDP for humanitarian assistance in response to the severe flooding affecting the country, WFP, in close coordination with the United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations Country Team (UNCT), launched a three month IR-EMOP in February for the emergency response to the flood affected population of Albania. WFP launched an unrestricted cash-based transfer distribution project to cover food needs over the three month period. This was carried out at the later phase of the immediate aftermath of the emergency to bridge the food gap of the most affected until alternative sources of income could be generated.

The IR-EMOP was aligned with WFP Strategic Objective 1, to save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies by: (i) conducting relevant assessments, coordinating and developing operational plans with government and national partners and other United Nations agencies; and (ii) ensuring a timely and uninterrupted delivery of assistance to the affected population.

Results

Beneficiaries, Targeting and Distribution

As a result of devastating floods in Albania, more than 42,000 people were directly affected in the south and south east regions of the country. Based on consultations with the UNCT, WFP launched a 90 day IR-EMOP. At the onset of this emergency, WFP responded with the establishment of a system of cash-based transfers for affected households through the provision of relevant technical support to the government.

The need for food assistance was identified at onset of the emergency through the preliminary assessment conducted by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the government, as one of the main emergency requirements. Assistance was provided to most of the affected vulnerable people by a number of different agencies and by the government during first few weeks after the floods. Accordingly, based on its food security assessment WFP decided to cover food needs of those vulnerable people who would require support for a longer period due to their limited coping capacity to recover.

Based on the assessment WFP conducted at the initial stage and in consultation with the government, WFP revised downward the initial planned beneficiary figure. WFP provided a one-off emergency cash-based transfer to almost 9,000 of the most vulnerable people affected by the floods with a value of 4,340 Albanian Lek (USD 34) per person per month to cover their essential food needs for three months, until the recovery phase commenced. This was an unconditional and unrestricted cash-based transfer with an equivalent value sufficient to cover a basic food basket with a provisional daily entitlement comprising 100 g of bread, 30 g of vegetable oil, 70 g of chicken, 100 g of apples, 100 g of vegetables, 50 g of rice, and 100 g of potatoes equating to approximately 1,020 kcal per person per day, meeting about half of the adult calorie daily requirement estimated at 2,100 kcal per person per day. The cash-based transfer was chosen as the most appropriate modality despite the plan to deliver assistance using the voucher modality, as no major disruption of markets at national or community level was found through the intersectorial assessment.

Beneficiaries who received a cash-based transfer included those who were evacuated from their houses and living with relatives. They comprised the most vulnerable groups of people, including women and children, elderly, Roma, people with disabilities, and the economically deprived who had lost assets such as winter reserves of food, seeds and livestock. The timing of the floods meant that large farms providing seasonal labour and small land holders producing food for household level consumption, missed the planting season, increasing the risk of medium term food insecurity. Among the most vulnerable were households dependent upon agricultural seasonal work opportunities on large farms, whose livelihoods were dramatically affected.

In partnership with the Civil Emergencies Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Albanian Red Cross, WFP established an agreed methodology for beneficiary selection. WFP developed socio-economic criteria to identify the most vulnerable households using inclusion and exclusion indicators, which were utilised by the local beneficiary selection committees to compose the list of vulnerable households requiring assistance. The data were uploaded into the SCOPE database which provided verification and approval of the beneficiary list. With the support

of the SCOPE team special software was designed which enabled the printing of individual bank cheques with required personal information and entitlements in the Albanian language.

Personal bank cheques were printed by WFP and handed over for distribution to the cooperating partner (CP). Beneficiaries were notified of the exact day, time and address of the distribution and cash-based transfer disbursement along with the rules for cashing cheques. The financial service provider (FSP) allocated space to the CP in its branches providing a convenient arrangement for beneficiaries, as receipt of the bank cheque and cash-based transfer disbursement would take place simultaneously. This enabled any problems with inaccurate personal data or other issues to be immediately recorded and addressed by the respective counterpart. The new cheques were issued following compilation of the cheque cancelation reports and additional distribution dates were organised as required.

Table 1: Overview of Project Beneficiary Information

Beneficiary Category	Planned			Actual			% Actual v. Planned		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total Beneficiaries	5,000	5,000	10,000	4,490	4,507	8,997	89.8%	90.1%	90.0%
By Age-group:									
Children (under 5 years)	1,000	1,000	2,000	261	261	522	26.1%	26.1%	26.1%
Children (5-18 years)	1,500	1,500	3,000	1,098	1,098	2,196	73.2%	73.2%	73.2%
Adults (18 years plus)	2,500	2,500	5,000	3,131	3,148	6,279	125.2%	125.9%	125.6%
By Residence status:									
Residents	5,000	5,000	10,000	4,490	4,507	8,997	89.8%	90.1%	90.0%

Table 2: Beneficiaries by Activity and Modality

Activity	Planned			Actual			% Actual v. Planned		
	Food	CBT	Total	Food	CBT	Total	Food	CBT	Total
General Distribution (GD)	-	10,000	10,000	-	8,997	8,997	-	90.0%	90.0%

Table 3: Participants and Beneficiaries by Activity (excluding nutrition)

Beneficiary Category	Planned			Actual			% Actual v. Planned		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
General Distribution (GD)									
People participating in general distributions	5,000	5,000	10,000	4,490	4,507	8,997	89.8%	90.1%	90.0%
Total participants	5,000	5,000	10,000	4,490	4,507	8,997	89.8%	90.1%	90.0%
Total beneficiaries	5,000	5,000	10,000	4,490	4,507	8,997	89.8%	90.1%	90.0%

The total number of beneficiaries includes all targeted persons who were provided with WFP food/cash/vouchers during the reporting period - either as a recipient/participant or from a household food ration distributed to one of these recipients/participants.

Cash-Based Transfer	Planned Distribution USD	Actual Distribution USD	% Actual v. Planned
Cash	-	921,719	-
Voucher	1,050,000	-	-

Cash-Based Transfer	Planned Distribution USD	Actual Distribution USD	% Actual v. Planned
Total	1,050,000	921,719	87.8%

Story Worth Telling

Salta, a happily married 73 year old and mother of 9, lives in Darzeza village in Fier, one of the areas most severely affected by the February floods, the worst to hit Albania in decades. Salta lives with her husband and 2 youngest sons. Her husband was responsible for taking care of the family farm, which was destroyed by the floods. Her family lost their 7 hens and a goat during the floods, the family house was badly damaged and most of their furniture and household belongings were lost. The family is surviving on the small pension the elderly couple receives. During the first two months after the floods Salta received food aid which allowed her to feed her family. They were also able to use their pension to begin repairs on the house and buy some basic items.

Although WFP had officially closed its office in Albania in 2006, following the severe flooding WFP responded to a request from the Government of Albania to provide assistance to the most vulnerable families in the affected communities to help them to rebuild their lives. With no office in-country, WFP opted to use SCOPE, an innovative cloud-based information platform for managing assistance programmes. This WFP-developed technology allowed offices to monitor and control distributions of food and cash based transfers in near real time, from anywhere. SCOPE further enabled Salta's household data to be imported from WFP's partner, the Albanian Red Cross, to create an electronic file used to personalize the blank cheques supplied by the bank. Salta was one of almost 9,000 people who received 13,020 Albanian Lek (USD 105) to cover her household's food needs for a 3-month period. Salta tells us that she bought ingredients to prepare *byrek*, a savory pie made with a thin, flaky pastry filled with cheese, meat, and spinach. "I'm extremely grateful because I can finally prepare *byrek* for my family again, with feta, yoghurt, and eggs."

Progress Towards Gender Equality

WFP ensured participation of women in the distribution of cash-based transfers under this project. The bank cheques were issued in the name of the eldest able-bodied female household member collecting household entitlements from the local bank branch. WFP paid consideration during beneficiary selection to ensure that women were represented on the beneficiary selection committee. Beneficiaries were selected through local village committees established with participation from traditional elderly leaders, poorest members of the community, women, people both directly affected or not affected by the floods. The CP worked closely with village leaders, community members and households headed by women to identify those which met the established criteria.

Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations

All distributions were conducted at the designated local branches of Intesa Sanpaolo Albania Bank during daytime hours to minimize any protection concerns. No safety incidents were reported from beneficiaries who participated in distributions, including travel to and from or at WFP programme sites.

Albania is one of the under-banked countries in Europe and the financial inclusion rate of the rural households is quite low. To sensitize the programme process to beneficiary communities, an extensive information campaign was implemented through radio, television, newspapers and internet. The beneficiary population was informed on the objectives of the assistance, targeting criteria and of their entitlement. The list of beneficiary households with precise distribution timelines and the address of the bank was posted in each village. The list clearly indicated the households entitled to the cash based transfers, ensuring the transparency of the project's activities. Furthermore, detailed instructions on the rules of the disbursement were communicated through leaflets along with the telephone numbers of the Intesa Sanpaolo Albania Bank's hotline and Red Cross offices where complaints and feedback could be given.

Outputs

WFP provided food assistance to almost 9,000 people affected by the floods in Albania. A one-time cash-based transfer entitlement was distributed to cover three months' food needs for selected households. This much needed assistance was provided during the lean season to support households affected by the emergency whose limited

coping strategies resulted in a longer recovery period.

A potential risk identified at the planning stage of the IR-EMOP was a lack of WFP operational presence in-country and the corresponding challenge of deploying staff with the necessary expertise to manage the project. The floods occurred when the country was in the midst of a run up to local authority elections and when the entire political and administrative structure of the local authorities was deemed to be reorganised according to newly adopted parliamentary legislation. Accordingly, the distribution of cash-based transfers to selected beneficiaries, although adhering to strict criteria, ran the risk of raising speculation and dissatisfaction among the population in the context of political change. Thus agreement was reached with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, Civil Defense Directorate and the Albanian Red Cross to postpone cash-based transfers distributions until after the elections, subsequently delayaying cash-based transfers distributions.

Outcomes

Due to the short duration of the project, no specific outcome indicators were determined to monitor the success of the project. Nevertheless, the Albanian Red Cross carried out beneficiary satisfaction exercises which provided some indication on the use of the cash-based transfers by the beneficiaries; beneficiaries confirmed using the full value of the entitlement for purchasing food. This allowed beneficiaries to allocate their limited resources to other priorities such as medicines, hygiene items, house repair and the purchase of livestock.

Inputs

Resource Inputs

WFP funded the entire project from its Immediate Response Account.

Food Purchases and In-Kind Receipts

No commodity was mobilized or purchased by WFP.

Management

Partnerships

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs appealed to the Executive Director to support the needs of the flood affected population in Albania. WFP worked with the Civil Defense Directorate of the Ministry of Internal affairs and United Nations Resident Coordinator's office.

On the ground, WFP conducted assessments in coordination with the Ministries of Interior and Social Welfare, UNICEF, FAO and UNDP, and other international agencies such as the World Bank and the European Union Civil Response Team.

At grassroots level WFP's CP, Albanian Red Cross and the local authorities of five affected prefectures, with the support of the branches of the Civil Registry Office of Albania, were supporting the process of beneficiary selection and verification. The Albanian Red Cross was responsible to sensitize beneficiaries on the project objectives and the rules for cash-based transfer disbursement.

Intesa Sanpaolo Bank of Albania was selected through the competitive procurement process to render the cash-based transfer disbursement services to WFP beneficiaries at district level.

Lessons Learned

Despite not having a presence in-country, WFP responded to the request of the government within 48 hours by approving an IR-EMOP and deploying an assessment mission to Albania within five days. This was made possible

by the rapid response of WFP's emergency preparedness and response mechanism at WFP's Regional Bureau in Cairo.

This was the first time for WFP to remotely establish and manage implementation of the cash-based transfer modality in response to the sudden onset in an oversight country without any operational presence. The implementation of this intervention allowed testing of the capacity of the WFP Regional Bureau in Cairo in responding to the population affected by the natural disaster through the provision of cash-based transfers in a country with relative political stability and medium banking infrastructure. However, WFP still has not deployed robust and flexible enough systems for the rapid establishment of cash-based transfers in new areas, due to extensive legal and procurement procedures, and a lack of experienced staff. The operation further affirmed the need for coordinated rapid multi-sectoral assessment in order to better and more efficiently respond to operational needs and to mitigate any potential complexities and risks. Through this experience the WFP Regional Bureau in Cairo is working to develop a cash-based transfer emergency toolkit.

Operational Statistics

Annex: Participants by Activity and Modality

Activity	Planned			Actual			% Actual v. Planned		
	Food	CBT	Total	Food	CBT	Total	Food	CBT	Total
General Distribution (GD)	-	10,000	10,000	-	8,997	8,997	-	90.0%	90.0%