

# Evaluation Brief



## Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation in Tajikistan

### WFP assistance to Tajikistan

Tajikistan is the poorest of the countries established after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. Following a civil war from 1992–1997 that took the lives of 50,000 people and a drought from 2000–2002, the country continues to suffer from high levels of poverty and food insecurity. The economy stands at 63 percent of the 1990 level, and 64 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line of US\$2.15 per day. Tajikistan also has the highest infant mortality rate in Central Asia, and acute and chronic malnutrition stand at 7.6 percent and 31.4 percent, respectively.

WFP has been active in Tajikistan since 1993, providing US\$172 million in support of two protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) and two emergency operations. The two-year US\$75 million PRRO “Food Assistance to Vulnerable Groups and Recovery Activities” (No. 10231.0) was launched in July 2003 and aimed to reach 1.5 million beneficiaries. Sixty-five percent of the resources were allocated for recovery and 35 percent for relief. The PRRO was extended to December 2006.

### Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The independent evaluation took place in April 2006 on behalf of WFP’s Office of Evaluation. Its objective was to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the PRRO and to inform the design of a possible new phase of assistance after December 2006. The evaluation team visited 33 projects in 15 of the 22 priority districts, and held interviews with staff of WFP, Ministries, United Nations agencies, donor and implementing partners, local authorities, sub-project committee members and participants, and beneficiaries. The evaluation also included desk reviews of documentation as well as vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and monitoring data.

### Key Findings and Conclusions

#### Impact of funding shortfalls on implementation

The main constraint to implementation of the PRRO was low levels of funding. As of June 2005 (the original closing date), the PRRO was only 44 percent resourced. As a result, 22 staff posts were cut and two of the four sub-offices and related storage facilities were closed. By the end of December 2005, only 52 percent of the planned food aid had been delivered. About 85 percent of the beneficiaries had been reached, but only at the cost of spreading resources more thinly.

#### Impact of shortfalls on activities

As contributions dried up, the scarce resources were directed at activities that were likely to show the most impact, in particular

food for education (FFE). Vulnerable group feeding (VGF) distributions and the beneficiary caseload were reduced, and from mid-2005 the country office discontinued activities related to food security, food for training (FFT) and income generation, and institutional feeding for psychiatric patients.

#### Sustainability of Vulnerable Group Feeding

Through WFP food assistance, VGF beneficiaries reduced the food expenditure from 74 percent of total income to 48 percent. However, once rations were finished, food expenditure returned to its previous level. VGF was largely ineffective for livelihood recovery because assistance was unpredictable and spread thinly, and the livelihood effects are ephemeral. At the same time the food incentive was highly effective in supporting tuberculosis treatment: treatment completion was 94 percent for those who received food, as opposed to 54 percent without food.

#### Maintaining high levels of school attendance

FFE was highly effective in increasing school attendance, from 85 percent to almost 100 percent, as well as the concentration of the students. However, these gains could be easily lost if WFP withdrew from Tajikistan without a proper exit strategy. In the case of Tajikistan, the government has included a school feeding programme for primary schools in its National Development Strategy. In addition, WFP shifted FFE from NGOs to district education departments and local authorities to help build local ownership. The local spirit of contribution is an important dimension to develop, particularly as it feeds into an exit strategy.

### Consistency of vulnerability assessments

Three vulnerability assessments were undertaken for the PRRO. Each used different methods, and each identified different areas of the country as food-insecure: for example, none of the seven high food-insecure districts identified by the 2003 assessment coincided with any of the 12 highly food-insecure districts identified by the 2005 assessment. Moreover, the results of the second VAM were highly controversial and politically sensitive – the assessment used a cluster approach that artificially combined incongruous groups of vulnerable people. Averaging across communities in a district and across districts in a particular zone often resulted in an inaccurate aggregate picture, which complicated targeting rather than clarified it. Such inconsistencies and inaccuracies clearly make users reluctant to trust the results.

## Recommendations

### Forecasting funding and responding to shortfalls

WFP headquarters should provide a funding forecast for operations rather than wait for project approval before appealing for funds. Non-traditional donors should be sought as well. In the event of shortfalls, WFP should ensure sufficient funds to allow a well-developed exit strategy to be implemented.

### Ensuring effective PRRO design

New PRRO designs should specify different sets of activities and targets for different funding scenarios, avoiding over-optimistic funding outlooks. Designs should include a time-bound exit strategy that is negotiated and agreed with the government and partners and involve a gradual transfer of activities, as well as their funding, to the appropriate government agency. In this regard, government capacity may need to be strengthened in order to continue the various components of WFP assistance.

### Using food aid instead of wages

Food rations should not be used in lieu of wages to support enterprise development in non-emergency situations. WFP should always monitor how profits are divided between the implementing partner and the workers.

### Linking food security to emergency situations

WFP should only implement food security sub-projects in emergency situations and only on land under household control. When sub-projects are being carried out on collective farms, WFP should monitor whether the food assistance is a resource transfer to the farm as opposed to the workers. WFP should monitor what happens to beneficiaries' production one year after the food assistance has ended.

### Linking institutional feeding to emergency situations

WFP should only support institutional feeding in emergency situations, as it is a resource transfer to the government and has no lasting impact on livelihoods. In addition, there should always be an agreed exit strategy.

### Improving vulnerability assessment

WFP should assist the country office to adapt and refine the 2005 VAM findings in order to make them useful for programming, using secondary data and key informants whenever possible. In addition, WFP should prepare guidance for country offices on how to use a VAM assessment for programming and how to refine geographic targeting.

### Strengthening the linkage between vulnerability assessment and programming

The linkage between assessment, programming and monitoring needs to be strengthened at all levels. WFP should assist the country office to develop a sub-project monitoring and reporting database that captures this linkage.

**Reference: Full and summary reports of the Tajikistan PRRO 10231.0 evaluation are available at:**  
[www.wfp.org/operations/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/operations/evaluation)

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