

## Operation Evaluation of WFP occupied Palestinian territory PRRO 10387.1

### Context

The Occupied Palestinian Territory underwent protracted emergency and renewed crisis during the period under review (September 2007 to August 2009), including major conflict at the end of 2008. The overall humanitarian situation deteriorated, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and the number of vulnerable people increased. Refugees comprise 65 percent of the Gaza Strip's population of 1.42 million people, and 27 percent of the West Bank's 2.34 million people. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has primary responsibility for supporting the refugee population; WFP is supporting the non-refugee population.

### WFP PRRO 10387.1: Targeted Assistance for Relief, Support to Productive Activities and Skills Development for Vulnerable Non-Refugee Palestinians (Sep 2007 – Aug 2009) extended to Dec 2010

The objectives of PRRO 103871 were to meet the food needs of the most vulnerable food-insecure non-refugees and to support the Palestinian Authority (PA) in poverty reduction through productive activities and skills development. Its three basic components were: 1) protracted and emergency relief, mostly through general food distribution (GFD) to those most vulnerable, but also through school feeding; 2) recovery through support for productive activities and skills development through FFW and FFT; 3) enhanced knowledge, partnerships and advocacy.

The aim was to support needs-based interventions based on the socio-economic and livelihood profiles of beneficiaries.

The PRRO planned to assist 665,000 beneficiaries over two years, primarily through provision of 164,605 mt of food at a total overall cost of US\$107.2 million. Subsequent revisions extended the operation to December 2010 and increased the overall budget to US\$204.3 million.

In the course of PRRO 103871, WFP responded to the December 2008 conflict in the Gaza Strip with EMOP 108170 "Operation Lifeline Gaza". As of January 2009, PRRO 103871 continued only in the West Bank, with 410,000 planned beneficiaries.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation was to seek to improve future performances of WFP operations by determining the reasons for the success and/or failure and support the internalisation of lessons in new practices. It was also to determine the degree of success and/or failure of the operation and accounts for aid expenditures to stakeholders.

The evaluation covered the period September 2007 to September 2009 and was carried out between July and December 2009 by a team of independent evaluators.

The evaluation report was presented to the Executive Board in November 2010.

### Key Findings and Conclusions

#### Relevance and appropriateness

In assessing the relevance and appropriateness of the PRRO, the central issues were related to how best to respond, within WFP mandate, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Given its parameters, the PRRO has been relevant, appropriate and reasonably coherent in addressing the humanitarian needs of its beneficiaries. WFP's steps towards replacing food aid with vouchers are strongly supported.

#### Effectiveness

Because of weaknesses in the PRRO logframes, effectiveness has been assessed against the PRRO's general objectives and targets. The relief components of the PRRO – in support of vulnerable groups – were generally effective in meeting their targets, except in the early phase of the operation, despite some significant disruptions to the pipeline. However, recovery components failed to meet targets, particularly in FFW interventions, because of funding shortfalls, which led to the prioritization of relief interventions; the capacity limitations of cooperation partners; and the difficulties of working with the political restrictions.

Unintended effects included the perpetuation of dependency on welfare, but the evaluators believe that a substantial component of welfare provision and protracted relief is justified in the circumstances of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

#### Efficiency

Cost efficiency has generally been good, given the exceptional circumstances in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Local purchase has generally been justified and should be extended; increases in cost may be considerable but could be offset by savings in overheads and could also be justifiable in terms of support to the local economy – although the impact needs to be carefully assessed case by case. Reliance on international NGOs as cooperating partners has added to costs, but has been the only realistic option. Timeliness was variable. Resources were generally adequate except for during a few months in 2008. Coordination with other stakeholders was generally good.

#### Impact

The overall impact of the PRRO, at both the macro and micro levels, can only be assessed in very general terms. The main impact has been to help arrest or reduce the decline in assets, purchasing power, food security and well-being of the sizeable target population by providing significant economic benefits. The more sustainable elements of the programme have augmented this impact, although not to the extent planned.

#### Sustainability

Relief activities undertaken under the PRRO are inherently unsustainable. Recovery activities have had varying degrees of sustainability, which have generally been highest for the agricultural rehabilitation activities of FFW. Sustainable FFT activities were unduly limited. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education's potential to assume long-term responsibility for school feeding represents another possible sustainable component.

Genuinely, sustainable income and food security will only be achievable if and when a political settlement is reached and the closure policy is lifted. For chronic humanitarian emergencies, such as in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the sustainability of resourcing for relief and recovery initiatives is itself a crucial issue, which is separate from the sustainability of the activities promoted.

WFP's capacity to maintain its interventions under the PRRO has been constrained by the limitations, uncertainties and timeframe of funding commitments, and the PRRO's vulnerability to destabilization or disruption because of such factors as perceived problems with wheat flour quality and onward sales of flour. Problems connected with political restrictions are likely to continue.

### Main Issues for the Future

Conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory mean that the need for humanitarian assistance is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Although there is still a need to provide a social safety net for the most vulnerable, interventions with sustainable components have more impact and are more appropriate, effective and efficient than relief or welfare. Increased capacity to incorporate interventions with sustainable components is an important issue for a future PRRO.

Food rations are not the most appropriate or efficient form of relief or recovery assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory's circumstances. The dilemma for WFP is how far and how fast it should aim to transform such programmes, and whether and at what point to hand over responsibility to other agencies, such as those able to implement cash-based alternatives.

The future of the school feeding programme, currently still in pilot form, is a major question for WFP. There is an urgent need to assess the impact and establish the objectives of this programme before further funds are committed.

It will be important to assess and prioritize the sustainable elements of recovery activities, especially FFW. For FFT, this involves prioritizing training in marketable skills. WFP should establish whether it can work with other partners in FFW and FFT activities and whether it has the capacity to manage an increase in local partners.

Political restrictions are likely to continue to generate severe problems for this and any succeeding PRRO. Onward sales of wheat flour may also continue to generate difficulties, unless donors change their approach to this issue.

Local purchase is a central issue. The innovative arrangements that evolved should be developed and expanded, even where the cost implications are significant.

WFP's capacity to maintain its interventions under the PRRO has been constrained by the limitations, uncertainties and timeframes of funding commitments.

Advocacy is an important issue for the future. WFP should lobby on questions of protection and humanitarian access, with particular reference to food. Lobbying of Israeli authorities should be a priority in an advocacy strategy

### Recommendations

*General food distribution:* The country office should continue its initiatives to replace GFD with voucher-based schemes. Expansion of such schemes should be on a controlled and incremental basis, with careful attention to the lessons learned from pilot projects and the requirements for adequate monitoring and management. If its mandate allows, the country office should explore the option of replacing GFD with cash-based schemes, initially on the West Bank, even if this means having another agency implement the operation. Management requirements should be carefully determined. Further research into targeting is needed and should sample the population as a whole. The methodological limitations identified in the targeting review, especially the focus on existing beneficiaries, should be recognized.

*Food for work and food for training:* FFT and FFW initiatives should put much greater emphasis on assessing long-term outcomes and prioritizing initiatives with sustainable components that promote livelihoods. For FFT, this means prioritizing training in marketable skills. The country office should consider working with more and a variety of types of partners in FFW and FFT initiatives. Selection of cooperating partners should be based primarily on interest in and capacity for identifying and supporting programmes that promote livelihoods, rather than on targeting vulnerable people. Priority should be given to local NGOs, or to international NGOs willing and able to work with local NGOs. For this, WFP will need to expand its management capacity appropriately.

*School feeding:* The current pilot project should not be expanded until the proposed consultancy on school feeding is complete and the proposed research into impact has been planned.

*Institutional feeding:* Institutional feeding should be continued along current lines, but should still be considered an interim measure until the PA is able to resume its responsibilities.

*Procurement and logistics:* The country office should expand the local purchase of food items even when prices are higher, because this both supports the local economy and improves the efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility and timeliness of deliveries. The country office should develop guidelines on acceptable cost premiums for local purchase, taking such other benefits into account. WFP should develop a secure, hand-held, electronic system of receipt and delivery accounting for use at warehouses and other delivery points.

*Finance:* WFP Headquarters should develop the capacity to provide greater interim financial support in response to temporary funding crises.

*Advocacy:* In collaboration with other United Nations agencies, the country office should take a lead in explaining the practical impact of the political restrictions on the effectiveness of humanitarian operations, and the extent to which they undermine humanitarian responsibilities. The country office should also advocate to mitigate the impact of closure and blockade. In particular, WFP should focus on efforts to lift restrictions on the commercial shipment of specific foods and on the reopening of the Gaza Strip crossing points.

*Planning, monitoring and evaluation:* Logframes for the next PRRO should be better aligned with the context of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the goals to be achieved and should include relevant and – where possible – measurable indicators. The logframes should be based firmly on the realities of the operation and be clearly connected to WFP Strategic Objectives.

**Reference: Full and summary reports of the Evaluation are available at: <http://www.wfp.org/about/evaluation>  
For more information, please contact the WFP Office of Evaluation: [wfp.evaluation@wfp.org](mailto:wfp.evaluation@wfp.org)**