

Closing remarks by Dr. Steven Were Omamo, Director of Policy and Advocacy, AGRA

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Thank you again for inviting AGRA to this important consultation. It has been very stimulating. Thank you also for the collaboration over the years. P4P has been key to the success of a number of AGRA grants, and we like to think that AGRA's investments have helped P4P take hold in a number of countries. We value this partnership very highly.

As WFP Director Stanlake Samkange said yesterday, P4P has come a long way in a short time, developing into an extraordinary partnership. Even as we await the results of the ongoing evaluation, we can say with some confidence that P4P has already made a difference, both within WFP and out there in the world.

That success springs from the leadership of Ken, the efforts of his fantastic team, the strong commitment of WFP's senior management and Country Offices, and, perhaps most importantly, the support and investment of partners like us. Indeed, I would assert (and perhaps the evaluation could explore) that the value of the complementary investments by P4P's partners far exceeds that of the core investment by donors in the P4P concept. If true, that is surely P4P's biggest victory and impact.

As I listened to the discussions over the last two days, I sensed three tensions facing WFP at this key point in the life of P4P – two are inward-looking, one is outward-facing. Let me try to articulate them and draw some conclusions.

Tension 1: Learning from P4P vs. impact under P4P

P4P is big investment built on a big idea. But it is still small in the larger scheme of things. In no country could one say that P4P has potential to impact a national level indicator. Yet, the expectation of impact at that level would appear to be strong. This seems to be the source of some cognitive dissonance. Soon all eyes will be on the evaluation, with believers hoping that there will be clear evidence of impact during the life of the project. But as might be expected, early "impact results" from analysis of survey data are mixed. As WFP considers these results and awaits those of the evaluation itself, it must strike the right balance between, on one hand remaining true to the idea that P4P is a learning pilot, and, on the other, being accountable for the development impact of an investment that is large by most standards in the field. It is especially important to remember the principles guiding the thoughts of the original designers, where P4P's "failures" would be the most fruitful sources of lessons. For instance, what should not be tried again? Which gaps are not worth trying to fill? These were viewed as equally important results as farmer-level livelihood impacts. It is critical that WFP find the right balance and communicate very clearly on this issue.

Tension 2: Seizing new opportunities to integrate vs. leveraging old capacities in new ways

The second tension relates to what WFP is already doing with the lessons emerging from P4P. Consider the presentations yesterday by the two WFP Division Directors, Stanlake Samkange and Corinne Fleischer. What Stanlake said about programming represented WFP's commitment to seizing new opportunities to integrate sometimes disparate parts of its programme portfolio, aiming for greater coherence and impact potential. What Corinne described as she outlined the concept of "patient procurement platforms" was P4P's evolving plans to leverage an old capacity (procurement) in new ways. Both thrusts have emerged from P4P. WFP is most ready to move on the latter – leverage procurement capacity in new ways. Yet the world is most in need of progress on the former – i.e., new integrated programming platforms. Knowing WFP, I imagine that it will try to deliver both. But there likely will be tradeoffs since opportunities to integrate imply new capacities that must be built up or bought in. At the very least, WFP should acknowledge these two important thrusts of its response to P4P's lessons, and communicate clearly about them.

Tension 3: Slowing down to better partner with others vs. speeding up to deepen and expand gains

The third (outward-facing) tension springs from the openings being created by P4P in development policy and action. Those openings spring from P4P's resonating with several priorities driving national development policy and global development debates – e.g., inclusive growth, smallholder farmer development, private sector engagement, integrated value chain development, and many more. As with any opening, these ones will not last forever and must be seized before they disappear.

P4P went from zero to launch in less than 12 months. It has continued at this fast pace during the pilot phase, building up an extraordinary partnership in the process. My sense is that P4P must continue at speed in the next phase, perhaps even speeding up. While it is important to build the trust and deep partnerships that promote scale and sustainability, it is also important to recognize that had WFP allowed itself to be pulled to the kind of multi-year consultation and negotiation process typically associated with large investments, P4P would still be merely an idea. Partnerships must continue to be fostered. But a consultation-driven, negotiation-heavy process to decide on the next phase should be avoided. Further, as WFP discusses the post-pilot phase with donors and partners, it must be careful to affirm and deploy the advantages that made it the only possible leader of the P4P pilot, most importantly the pragmatism and speed of thought and action in food markets that, when channeled in the right directions, give traction to others' investments.

Conclusions

The first tension – learning vs. impact – was anticipated up-front. Key design features of the pilot reflect this. The evaluation should be very helpful in resolving it productively.

The second two tensions were less well-articulated at the outset. How they are resolved will define what comes next. Knowing WFP and the partners that have made P4P what it is, I am fully confident that the resolutions will be productive.

My personal view is that **capacity development** properly defined may be a productive hook on which to hang the post-pilot phase. P4P is throwing up extraordinarily precise insights

and clues about capacity development needs at many levels of food value chains. In contexts as varied as Afghanistan and Sierra Leone at one extreme to Malawi and Guatemala at the other, **policy reform priorities** are being revealed (especially with respect to food marketing policy), **institutional and organizational capacity gaps** of public, NGO, and private sector stakeholders are being identified, and **individual skills** required by key actors are being revealed, most notably among the millions of women farmers whose efforts and decisions will define the future of global agriculture. Where else could one find such a pragmatic, structured, and evidence-based set of clues about where, how, and with whom to strengthen food value chains?

Some of the experiences shared during this meeting (e.g., the maize example from Ethiopia) suggest that something like “**targeted coordinated demand-driven capacity development in food value chains**” might be the “gold” you’re saying might be carried forward into the future, where the incentive provided by a benevolent off-taker like WFP generates the core incentives that provides a platform on which to develop partnerships and pool investments that together change the game. My sense is that designed and implemented in the way that the P4P pilot was designed and implemented –imaginatively, quickly, pragmatically – such a capacity development-focused initiative would be relevant, timely, and game changing. But that gold must first be dug out and refined. WFP should not take forever doing that.