Fourth P4P Annual Consultation: Moving Forward Together

This update focuses on the 4th WFP P4P Annual Consultation held at FAO Headquarters in Rome from 28 to 31 January. Two days were dedicated to dialogue with a broad range of partners, including government representatives, local and international NGOs, research institutes, UN agencies, donors and, most importantly, farmers themselves. Internal WFP discussions took place on two additional days, with participants from country offices, regional bureaux and headquarters. Participants included P4P Country Coordinators, Country Directors, and staff from a broad range of WFP divisions, including legal, logistics, procurement, programme and policy. Internal discussions focused on the successes and challenges of P4P over the past four years. A total of 197 people from over 25 countries attended the Annual Consultation (98 WFP staff and 99 partners).

In opening the Annual Consultation, the WFP Executive Director spoke of P4P as a global and diverse community where the concepts of partnership, resilience and food assistance are ‘more than talk. They are the products of our daily labour; they are the measuring sticks with which we validate success.’

Recurring Themes
While analysis of P4P successes and challenges identified by various partners is presented on the following pages, some themes arose across all stakeholder groups, as well as in plenary discussion:

- P4P has been a catalyst for change in numerous countries – from providing the impetus for the Government-led ‘Common P4P’ in Rwanda to the ambitious plans by the Government of Ethiopia to undertake large-scale purchases from smallholder farmers.
- Capacity building, particularly training, has made a real difference in supporting farmers to produce and market higher quality commodities to WFP and other markets.
- Bureaucracy continues to be a challenge, be it within WFP, within Governments or across agencies.
- Partnership among the Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs) must continue to be strengthened looking towards the post-pilot, with meaningful engagement from the planning stage through execution and evaluation.
- P4P must rigorously and systematically document and disseminate experiences and learning – both quantitative and qualitative.
- Significant strides have been made on gender issues and the momentum must be maintained.
- Access to affordable credit and timely payment continue to be of concern. While these challenges have been raised on a number of occasions in the past, and some progress made, there is little doubt that addressing these must be a key component of the post-pilot design.

Memorable Words
Perhaps the most inspirational words came from farmers themselves, with Fatu Namieh Nyen from Liberia singing a P4P song that spoke of bringing peace to her country and enabling her children to go to school. Karla Trujillo from El Salvador spoke with passion of the opportunities given to women farmers through P4P, adding ‘We enjoy the best capital of all, human capital’.

An Internal Perspective
In an open and frank discussion on the internal aspects of P4P, the catalytic effect of the pilot was acknowledged, with significant changes having taken place to WFP’s internal systems, particularly procurement. In addition, corporate support for P4P has given staff the confidence to explore, experiment and treat ‘failures’ as valuable learning opportunities. However, much remains to be done and the post-pilot strategy must:

- recognize the importance of embedding P4P into the country office structure, ensuring that staff are provided with the necessary support and strive to increase a sense of ownership of P4P beyond those working directly on this initiative.
- seek out opportunities for synergies with other WFP activities. For example, climate change, Home Grown School Feeding, nutrition, cash and vouchers, and weather insurance.
Looking beyond the P4P pilot, the four Government representatives highlighted the need to:

- reduce post-harvest losses and commercialization, as well as limited basic infrastructure such as storage facilities and equipment for smallholder farmers;
- increase farmer access to credit for agricultural inputs and equipment;
- build the capacity of smallholder farmers to become sustainable and fully engage in the market, which also contributes to broader development goals, such as storage facilities and equipment to reduce post-harvest losses.

Deeper coordination between the Rome Based UN Agencies, on the other hand, was seen as a key challenge that the Government partners would like to see addressed, while they also acknowledged the importance of increased coordination between their own government institutions. Challenges in building the capacity of smallholder farmers include farmers’ access to credit for agricultural inputs and commercialization, as well as limited basic infrastructure such as storage facilities and equipment to reduce post-harvest losses.

Looking beyond the P4P pilot, the four Government representatives highlighted the need to:

- strengthen partnerships with the private sector in order to create more sustainable and efficient value chains;
- enhance collaboration between the Rome Based Agencies in pro-smallholder agriculture projects, with governments taking a leadership role; and
- link P4P-like initiatives with National Safety Net Programs such as National Reserves or school feeding programmes.

Local Partners

Valuable insights on the impact of P4P at the grassroots level were provided by P4P’s local partners who included representatives of three farmers’ organisations – Nso Nyame Ye women’s group in Ghana, El Garucho farmers’ organisation of El Salvador and Faso Jigi farmers’ organisation of Mali – as well as P4P’s development partner ACDI/VOCA.

All three Farmers’ Organisations (FOs) highlighted significant improvements in their production capacity, post-harvest handling, marketing skills and quality of the produce as well as access to credit, inputs and equipment since the start of the P4P pilot. These positive developments, which have successfully connected smallholder farmers to markets, were mainly attributed to the focus on training and WFP’s position as a guaranteed buyer. Karla Trujillo from the El Garucho farmers’ organisation also spoke of the increased recognition of the farmers’ role as well as a shift in mentality to produce in a more environmentally friendly and health-conscious way.

The empowerment of women was mentioned as a positive outcome, but also a challenge as land ownership and cultural prejudices remain problematic. Comfort Appiah from the Nso Nyame Ye women’s group experienced problems with agricultural inputs which often reached them late as male farmers’ groups received priority. William Sparks from ACDI/VOCA said that despite both women and men receiving training and increasing production, women still receive a lower price for their produce. Other challenges highlighted by the three FOs were high interest rates for credit, limited and expensive storage capacity, delays in payments by WFP, as well as difficulties in accessing markets beyond WFP.

Looking beyond the P4P pilot, the importance of the local context was emphasized. Good governance and government ownership in building smallholder farmer capacity are key. As emphasized by ACDI/VOCA, sustainable training targeting smallholder farmers also needs to take the local environment into account and involve local governments. For FOs to become sustainable and fully engage in the market, they also need to know how to reach out to local resource institutions, thereby gaining access to services and support. Two FOs where P4P has already been successful in this respect are Faso Jigi and El Garucho. P4P and its partners’ interventions empowered Faso Jigi to successfully develop partnerships with other development institutions. El Garucho, trained in the necessary negotiating skills, was able to reach out to other buyers—a remarkable achievement as Karla emphasized: “We have been invited to sit down at the negotiating table with people who we never dreamt we would meet in our lives.”
**UN Agencies and Intergovernmental Partners**

Representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UN Women shared their experiences of partnering with P4P. These partners work with WFP at a broad level, while also partnering specifically on P4P at Headquarters, regional and country levels. There are significant complementarities across these agencies, resulting in strong similarities in their perspectives of successes, challenges and ideas on the best way forward.

The importance of ‘buy-in’ at the corporate level was recognized by these partners, which facilitates the building of relations at the local level, particularly when there are many potential areas of collaboration which can, at times, be seen to be competing with each other. Within each organization, the commitment to the goals of P4P was acknowledged, which complements their organizations’ own strategic goals. Many practical examples of collaboration were shared, from the seven joint FAO/P4P case studies focusing on institutional buyers to the IICA/P4P work on strengthening technological, agribusiness capabilities and practices of farmers in Latin America. In both cases, partners clearly articulated the direct benefits of such engagement for their own organization, as well as clearly benefiting the P4P pilot. In discussions, there was a sense of excitement and anticipation regarding the learning pillar of P4P, with a genuine willingness to be actively engaged in the process.

One of the key challenges raised was the limited stakeholder consultation when the pilot was being designed in 2008. This was a lost opportunity to capitalize on potential synergies from the outset, although recognizing that these synergies evolved as the pilot advanced. As the budget process in some agencies requires extensive advance planning, it was sometimes difficult to secure internal resources to support exciting partnership initiatives which emerged after the pilot began. The reality of the size, complexity and bureaucratic nature of these organizations was also identified as a challenge, with the belief that this will be difficult to overcome.

Looking beyond the P4P pilot, there was agreement that a broad range of stakeholders need to be involved in the design of the post-pilot from the outset. Opportunities must be seized to gain a deeper understanding of each agency’s strengths in specialized areas, while also recognizing limitations. The need for knowledge management and information sharing between organizations was also identified as an area which should continue to be prioritized.

**International Development Partners**

A unique feature of this group was its composition of donors and operational partners, allowing for an open discussion of their experiences with P4P. International donors were represented by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, while SNV and USAID/DCA presented from an operational perspective.

All four speakers from this diverse group concluded that their partnership with P4P has been rewarding and that P4P provides a rich learning and sharing platform. As a result, P4P has promoted meaningful debate on the role of the smallholder in agricultural development. This accumulated knowledge offers an opportunity to advocate for policy change, especially related to public procurement. WFP’s flexibility, patience and risk appetite were also commended.

The Foundations noted that working with WFP can sometimes be overly complex due to the bureaucratic nature of the organization. Because of this complexity, smaller partners may feel overwhelmed when trying to engage with P4P. A further challenge shared was the disconnect in coverage: although all organisations are present at field level, specific locations can vary and therefore hinder cooperation. Finally, the management of expectations of what P4P can achieve over five years has been difficult because anticipated results may require more time and investment.

Looking forward, the need for a clear exit strategy was highlighted. SNV emphasized the need to embed the ideas of P4P in civil society and to ensure strong social accountability in the P4P pilot countries. The way forward needs to be shaped by strong and focused advocacy and in order to achieve this greater engagement with governments is essential. USAID/DCA believes that the wealth of knowledge accumulated during the pilot needs to be shared broadly, especially with financial institutions. This approach, if done methodically and strategically, will place P4P in a prime position to advocate for less restrictive credit access – a key challenge for smallholder agricultural development.

For the post pilot P4P, it is crucial to leverage partners to expand and adopt the successful approaches identified under P4P while exploring new ways of connecting farmers to markets. This means more robust partnerships with governments, private sector, and NGOs as well as a richer, more integrated collaboration between the RBAs.”

Alesha Black
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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As P4P enters the last year of the five-year pilot period, results are emerging. Some of these were shared during the Annual Consultation, focusing on Farmers’ Organizations. While it is too early to provide comprehensive evidence related to P4P’s impact on gender empowerment, an update was provided on challenges faced and progress so far. The two articles which follow highlight these two issues.

**Why farmers’ organisations default on contracts**

Since the inception of P4P, WFP has contracted about 300,000mt of commodities for US$115 million from farmers’ organisations and other structured marketing platforms. However, not all contracted commodities reach WFP. About 30% of the total volume contracted directly from farmers’ organizations has been defaulted since late 2008. P4P is continuously analysing the reasons for default to develop effective strategies to reduce them.

The performance of individual farmers’ organizations in fulfilling their contracts with WFP has been mixed, but challenges related to the supplier’s capacity are a persistent problem for the majority of the pilot countries and the main reason for default. In the case of farmers’ organizations, this usually relates to low capacity to bulk members’ produce effectively and in a timely fashion. It takes time, trust among members, financing and storage to effectively aggregate. Overall, 56% of all defaults by farmers’ organizations have been attributed to capacity issues.

Analysing the specific reasons, delays in the bulking process leading to “side selling by individual farmers during aggregation” were most commonly mentioned. For a farmers’ organization to sell to WFP, signing a contract only constitutes the first step. One key task is to assemble all individual contributions which can range from one bag to ten or more. This process is further complicated as farmers usually deliver their commodities to the farmers’ organization collection point at different times. It can take weeks until all commodities are aggregated. Following aggregation, commodities still need to be cleaned, dried and conditioned before an independent superintendent can certify their quality. After all these steps, WFP collects the contracted commodities and initiates the payment process.

If organizations aggregate quickly, farmers are often more willing to wait for payment keeping in mind that WFP pays a fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash. Although being fair market price for high quality, clean and dry commodities. However, the longer the aggregation process takes the more likely it becomes that farmers may withdraw their crops to sell them to traders for immediate cash.

Another reason for default was the failure to fulfil WFP’s stringent quality standards, although this played a less important role than expected in most countries. Case studies in 2011 have shown that the right training and equipment enable farmers to learn quickly about improving quality. It often takes only a few contracts with WFP for farmers’ organizations to improve the necessary drying, cleaning and grading processes. However, an important factor impacting quality which needs to be further addressed is the moisture level, which particularly poses a challenge in countries with high humidity.

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<th>P4P Annual Consultation</th>
<th>Rome, 29-30 January 2013</th>
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<td><strong>Volumes defaulted (MT) on completed contracts, % defaults and main reasons for defaults among FOs by country</strong></td>
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<td>[total defaults from Sept 2008 to Sept 2012: 45,000mt = 30% of total contracted]</td>
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<td>Afghanistan</td>
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<td>Kenya</td>
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**Specific reasons for FO defaults**

[totals defaults from Sept 2008 to Sept 2012: 45,000mt, 30% of contracts directly with FOs]

- Unavailability of Funds to cover price increases...
- Difficulty in organizing transport by the supplier...
- Social and Political disturbances...
- Late Contract Signature...
- Miscalculation of the Marketing Costs...
- Non-availability of the required quantity...
- No aggregation (lack of trust in the group, lack of...)
- Broken/Damaged Grains...
- Climatic Conditions...
- No/Late/insufficient Access to Credit (affecting...
- Side selling by the supplier during aggregation...
P4P as a tool for empowering women

At the beginning of P4P, it was expected that aside from the myriad challenges of buying food from smallholders, it would be a relatively straightforward exercise to buy from female smallholders. However, this proved far from easy.

The farmers’ organisations (FOs) as P4P’s entry point presented the first challenge in terms of buying from women farmers. The majority of the FOs taking part in P4P are mixed gender and have a lower proportion of women registered as members and also few women participating in the FOs leadership. This forced WFP and its partners to reflect carefully on how P4P could facilitate women’s integration. Developing a Global Gender Strategy together with the Agriculture Learning Impacts Network (ALInE), it became clear that far fewer women than imagined actually met the criteria used to define a smallholder farmer as they neither own land in their independent right, or control the decisions about which crops their households will produce and trade.

Under the Gender Strategy, P4P now ensures that women participating in the FOs are offered equal opportunity as men to contribute to WFP contracts. WFP persistently encourages FOs to give priority to contributions coming from women, and monitors women’s participation in contracts. However, even when women own land and can qualify as FO members, they face another important constraint: time. Taking time out to join groups is often a luxury women can least afford. In Malawi, one woman told us: “If I have to go to the cooperative meetings then I leave my house just after 6 AM. I will wake up at around 4 AM to complete all my chores before I leave for the meeting.”

Across the pilot countries, contributions of women are increasing over time, but still fewer women than men are actually involved in the sales; and the average volumes they contribute are lower than men’s. The overall proportion of women in P4P-supported FOs rose from 19% at the start of P4P to 29% at the end of 2012. However, the relative weight of Ethiopia biases the results as Ethiopia targets Cooperative Unions with a large membership base and low percentage of women. If Ethiopia is excluded, female membership in P4P-supported FOs rises from 43% in 2009 to 47% in 2012.

Women’s crops

In most traditional settings, men are less involved in the sale of pulses as these are considered to be “women’s crops”. There is an opportunity for women here; and WFP has stepped up efforts to buy pulses in the pilot countries.

In Ghana, P4P is linking FOs to government initiatives that provide subsidies on inputs and tractor hire, as well as loans and training for farmers. In Nicaragua, revolving funds set up by FOs offer agricultural inputs on credit to their members, with 21% of recipients being women. In Burkina Faso, women used credit accessed through participation to sales of staple crops to start income generating activities.

Apart from female smallholders, P4P is also working with women working as seasonal labourers on farms that sell through P4P, or as labourers in processing and packing activities. During a case study in 2011, farmers reported being able to hire more casual labour now that they were selling more crops and making money from selling to WFP. Women dominate among those hired to weed and harvest crops.

Labor-saving equipment

Providing labour-saving equipment cuts across the needs of all women engaged in agriculture. Apart from the time savings, business opportunities associated with some of these products also benefit both women and men: Simple hand-powered maize shellers have been provided to FOs, and local artisans and traders are experiencing a rise in sales of these items; FOs earn money by charging their members each time they use the shellers. The introduction of these labour-saving technologies is also transforming the dynamics of traditional gender division of labour within the household. Many men now use this small-scale machinery to perform work normally considered as women’s.

Challenges

A lot has been achieved, but many challenges remain: Whatever priorities for action the pilot countries identify, they rely on having partners on the ground. Many of the potential partners specialised in gender have limited staff capacity which constrains their ability to adequately support P4P activities. Secondly, although women may be consulted in a number of different capacities within the household, they are often denied decision-making power over the spending of their own income, let alone that of their husbands.

Exciting as these developments are, care must be taken to avoid women falling victim to rejection within their families who may see a newly empowered woman as going against or even challenging traditional norms. Promoting women’s empowerment in highly traditional settings is a challenging task and there is a need to be aware of cultural sensitivities. Awareness raising is crucial and this is fully incorporated into the design and implementation of P4P gender activities.
Do you want to learn more about the presentations given at the Annual Consultation?

The 4th Annual Consultation brought together a broad range of WFP staff, experts and partners. Their speeches, presentations and videos, which formed the core of a rich dialogue, can be accessed on the following website:

www.wfp.org/our-work/preventing-hunger/purchase-progress/annual-consultation-presentations

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**P4P Technical Review Panel Meeting, Rome, Italy**

25 – 28 February 2013

The Technical Review Panel (TRP) brings together a group of experts on agricultural economics, market development and monitoring and evaluation to provide P4P with a critical review of the results emerging from the implementation across the pilot countries. The TRP provides expert insight into the implementation challenges facing P4P as well as concrete suggestions on responding to these challenges; and supports the identification and validation of the key lessons emerging from the global implementation of the pilot. Findings of the Technical Review Panel will be shared in future updates.

### CALENDAR

- 7 February 2013, Meeting between BMGF, Senior WFP Management and P4P Coordinator, Seattle, USA
- 18 – 19 February 2013, WFP Executive Board, First Regular Session, Rome, Italy

The update is published by the P4P Coordination Unit in Rome, Italy.

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