The contribution of food assistance to durable solutions in protracted refugee situations: its impact and role in Bangladesh: A Mixed Method Impact Evaluation

Subject and Focus of the Evaluation

The Rohingya refugee situation in Bangladesh is one of the most protracted in the world, with almost twenty years of continuous camp settlements in some areas in the most recent period. There are significant cultural and socio-economic differences between the Rohingya and local populations and there are many challenges to finding ‘durable solutions’. In this context then, the impact of food assistance on the different protracted refugee populations needs to be better analyzed and understood.

Objectives and Users of the Evaluation

This evaluation serves both accountability and learning purposes. The main objectives are:

- to evaluate the outcomes and impact of food assistance interventions within the protracted Rohingya refugee settlements of Bangladesh, and;
- to identify changes needed to improve the food assistance interventions such that they contribute to the attainment of self-reliance and or durable solutions for the Rohingya refugee populations

This is one of a series of four WFP/UNHCR joint evaluations to be carried out during 2011 and 2012 in different countries. The overall objective of the series is to provide evidence for future strategies to improve the contribution of food assistance to increased self-reliance and potentially to durable solutions for both refugees and host populations in protracted refugee situations.

Groups directly involved in implementing or benefiting from the operations for the Rohingya refugees are the main users of the evaluation and comprise: (i) refugees, (ii) the government of Bangladesh, at the national, district and local levels, (iii) implementing partners (NGOs), (iv) UNHCR and WFP.

Indirect stakeholders include: WFP and UNHCR regional and headquarter offices, donor agencies supporting the Rohingya refugee operations in Bangladesh, and other UN agencies.

Key Evaluation Questions

The primary evaluation question is:

- What are the differential impacts of long-term food assistance on the different Rohingya refugee and refugee-affected populations in Bangladesh?

The secondary questions are:

- What are the impacts on food security and nutritional outcomes?
- What are the impacts on refugee movement?
- How does food assistance affect household coping strategies, including informal social protection mechanisms, and the prospects for self-reliance?
- What are the impacts on protection and the protective environment?

Scope and Methodology

All WFP and UNHCR operations involving food assistance from over the past 10 years (2002-2011) will be included in the evaluation. WFP has had five consecutive operations since 2002 that focus exclusively on registered refugees, each covering the two official camps and primarily on general food distribution in the camp. UNHCR has had more operational activity over this period, but not all UNHCR activities will be the focus of the evaluation.

This impact evaluation takes a mixed methods approach. The four methods are: (1) desk review of existing literature and stakeholder interviews
to establish and assess the institutional logic of the programme, implementation strategies and allocations of resources; (2) review of literature and secondary data; (3) quantitative survey(s) as necessary to complement existing data and ensure the evaluation team can answer the evaluation questions; and (4) qualitative field interviews among beneficiaries and all key stakeholders.

Roles and Responsibilities

The evaluation team, from Fundación DARA Internacional, is internationally and nationally recruited and has strong technical background in conducting independent evaluations for humanitarian and development organizations. The team members bring together a complementary combination of technical expertise in the fields of a) food security & livelihoods, b) nutrition, c) social protection and safety nets, d) protection and gender and e) evaluation methodology, including qualitative and quantitative data analysis, sampling, etc. The team members are also familiar with the refugee context and WFP’s and UNHCR’s operational modalities.

This evaluation is managed by Office of Evaluation in WFP jointly with the UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service. Ross Smith is the WFP evaluation manager and Angela Li Rosi is the UNHCR evaluation manager. WFP will lead management of the process, but all communications will be sent out jointly.

Communication

Briefings and de-briefings will include participants from country, regional and headquarters level. Participants unable to attend a face-to-face meeting will be invited to participate by telephone. Four debriefing sessions are planned, as follows:

- informal debriefing with Country Office senior management of UNHCR and WFP in Bangladesh (aide-memoire)
- debriefing of UNHCR and WFP Country Office staff in Bangladesh (aide-memoire and presentation)
- debriefing of external stakeholders in Bangladesh (presentation)
- debriefing of WFP and UNHCR headquarter-based stakeholders, with participation of Country Office management (presentation)

Timing and Key Milestones

**Inception Phase:** The evaluation inception phase will take place in 18-22 March 2012.

**Fieldwork Dates:** Field visits will take place during April and May 2012.

**Briefings:** A number of debriefing sessions are expected to be held end-May 2012.

**Reports:** The draft evaluation report available for comments will be available in July 2012.

The Summary Evaluation Report will be presented to WFP’s Executive Board in November 2012.

Reference:

Full and summary reports of the Evaluation and the Management Response are available at http://www.wfp.org/evaluation