

برنامج
الأغذية
العالمي



Programme
Alimentaire
Mondial

World
Food
Programme

Programa
Mundial
de Alimentos

**Executive Board
First Regular Session
Rome, 20 - 22 January 1999**

INFORMATION NOTES

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS' VISIT TO GUATEMALA AND NICARAGUA

27 October–7 November 1998



Distribution: GENERAL
WFP/EB.1/99/INF/9
19 January 1999
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

This document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies.

INTRODUCTION

1. As part of the Executive Board Members' visit to the Central America and Caribbean region, the group visited Guatemala from 27 October to 1 November, and Nicaragua from 1 to 7 November 1998. The team was composed of representatives of Bangladesh, Belgium, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Haiti, Indonesia, Sierra Leone and the United States of America. Members were accompanied by the Regional Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau. The list of participants is provided in Annex I.
2. The purpose of the visit was to give Board Members an opportunity of seeing for themselves the way WFP project activities, mostly in development, are being executed, with a view to such experiences helping improve the future work of the Board.
3. While the mission was on duty, Hurricane Mitch struck the Central America and Caribbean region; this compelled the team to redefine the purpose of the mission and make changes to the programme in light of the massive destruction caused to roads and bridges.

PROGRAMME OF THE VISIT

4. In Guatemala the team members visited the sites of the following development projects: assistance to primary schoolchildren and vulnerable groups, soil conservation and agroforestry activities in depressed areas, construction of infrastructure in depressed areas and the emergency operation on food assistance for returnees and displaced persons. They met with the Vice-president, officials of the Food Security Cabinet and government officials of the executing units. In addition, the mission met with representatives of United Nations agencies and donor countries, and Ambassadors in Guatemala. The visit to Guatemala proceeded according to schedule in spite of the fact that during the last day of the visit Hurricane Mitch struck the country.
5. When the mission reached Nicaragua, the hurricane was in full action. This obliged the mission members to redefine the scope and objectives of the Mission; the focus of the group was to make a preliminary assessment/observation of the disaster and its effects on and implications for projects under implementation.
6. In Nicaragua the members met government Ministers and officers of the Secretariats of External Cooperation, of Education, of the Family, of Social Action, of Agriculture, officials of the Technological Institute, Mayors of municipalities, local NGOs and United Nations agency representatives. The programme of the visits is provided in Annex II.

KEY POINTS FROM MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES, UN AGENCY HEADS, REPRESENTATIVES OF DONORS AND NGOS

7. The officials of the Government of Guatemala pointed out that WFP assistance was of great help in the rehabilitation of the returnees and displaced persons who, following the signature of the peace agreement, are returning to their places of origin. They underlined the important role being played by WFP in household food security through the development activities under implementation. The Government's commitment, as part of



the peace agreement, was to gradually reform institutions and pursue policies which would directly benefit the poor and extremely poor. In this context The National Fund for Peace (FONAPAZ - Fondo Nacional para la Paz), has been created at the regional level to implement most of the activities. Guatemala is one of the countries where the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is being implemented, and efforts are under way for joint programming and cooperation. UN agency representatives emphasized the importance of joint efforts in the reconstruction of the country in order to achieve a stronger impact. However, due to the different mandates of each agency, this is not always possible.

8. The mission arrived in Nicaragua the day after Hurricane Mitch had hit the country. Consequently, discussions with government officials, UN, NGO representatives and beneficiaries focused on the importance of emergency food assistance to the victims of Hurricane Mitch who were sheltered in hospitals, schools and provisional camps. The team members had the opportunity to watch a 30-minute video on the destruction brought about by Mitch to persons, livestock, crops and infrastructure. UN agency representatives informed the Mission of the measures planned to help the Government cope with the crisis and cooperate in the recovery. Food aid was of key importance in improving the nutritional status of vulnerable groups.

OBSERVATIONS FROM VISITS TO PROJECT SITES

Guatemala

9. The Mission found that food assistance was provided in a timely manner to populations affected by El Niño and the returnees who had been displaced by the war.
10. Food assistance to pre-school and primary schoolchildren was of great importance, since children appear to attend WFP-assisted schools primarily in order to receive a prepared meal or snack. It was observed that most of the children discontinue their studies once they leave the primary level of schooling. Provision of food as an incentive for families to send their children to the end of the primary level is important. However, in order to enable schoolchildren to achieve their full potential and to contribute to national development efforts, it is vital that some kind of programmes exist to ensure that these children complete the process of learning after they leave the primary level. This activity would greatly benefit from enhanced collaboration with other UN agencies, particularly UNICEF and UNESCO to improve teacher training, teaching materials, school infrastructure and organization of parent support groups which were found weak in the schools visited.
11. The Government has purchased and made available land with minimal infrastructure to assist the affected population. Care must be taken to avoid environmental degradation in these resettlement areas.
12. Although women are targeted in the emergency, the operation would benefit considerably by increasing their involvement in its execution.
13. The pulses delivered to the beneficiaries of the EMOPs were not well accepted because not part of the local eating habits.



14. In the sites visited where construction of infrastructure is taking place in depressed areas affected by the internal conflict, it was observed that a high degree of illiteracy at the community level existed.
15. The impact of the food for work activities carried out under the emergency operation was difficult to assess.

Nicaragua

16. Members noted that the persons affected by Hurricane Mitch who were housed in shelters were mainly poor farmers who lost their homes or went to the shelters in search of food and clothing along with shelter. It was also observed that the population would not go back to their place of origin unless their basic needs were once again guaranteed.
17. Although in some areas timely and on-site distribution of food was not always possible, WFP was one of the agencies that supplied food to the victims immediately. Bridges and roads destroyed rendered distribution to some areas difficult. However, WFP sought ways and means to send food to the victims. For example, food was delivered using helicopters and boats. Moreover, food was purchased in the isolated areas, even though the truck drivers whose vehicles transported food were unable to move.
18. In some of the municipalities visited it was observed that food was provided in activities such as cleaning of roads, houses and installation of camps.
19. Damages to the second crop season were recorded to be as high as 70%. A third planting was not considered feasible. While damage to livestock was relatively limited, farmers felt that the scarcity of animal feed would result in a decrease in milk production.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Guatemala

20. In the education sector, the project should aim to support bilingual schools and pre-school centres, so as to ensure that the indigenous population - the poorest - benefit from the programme. In addition, emphasizing vocational training in food-assisted schools alongside general education was considered desirable.
21. Targeting of the most vulnerable groups was generally satisfactory. However, efforts may continue to further redefine focus on such groups.
22. Increased involvement of local government institutions and elected representation in project design, implementation and evaluation was desirable in order to ensure sustainability.
23. Although Guatemala was the first country in Central America where UNDAF is being formulated, increased efforts on cooperation among UN organizations is recommended.
24. WFP should increase its capacity to undertake more frequent spot-checks in order to ensure that food actually reaches those for whom it is intended. The idea is to eliminate losses incurred in the process, if any.
25. Careful attention must be paid by WFP to the selection of the commodities that make up the food basket.



26. A greater involvement of NGOs in the reconstruction process is strongly encouraged. The Government will provide a proper "enabling environment" to permit all sectors of society to assist in the process. The project should also encourage the active and sustained participation of municipal government, including financial support wherever feasible.
27. The Government's school feeding and nutrition (PAIN) programme is considered sound and should be expanded whenever feasible

Nicaragua

28. WFP may wish to review the activities of the country programme to assess the impact of Hurricane Mitch on projects under implementation and to fill any gaps. It was suggested that the country/regional office may consider incorporating measures into development projects which would provide some kind of in-built flexibility to enable disaster preparedness and mitigation, should such natural disasters hit again.
29. The mission stresses the need for cooperation and coordination of the various actors specifically at the field level, where action is vital for effective results.
30. Finally, the members of Mission would express their appreciation to the Governments of the two countries and the many officials who gave their time and experience to inform the Members on the work performed by WFP. They would also express appreciation for the enthusiasm and dedication of the WFP country teams in implementing the programmes and activities, and for the support given during the visit.



ANNEX I**MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MISSION TO
GUATEMALA AND NICARAGUA**

Bangladesh	Mr. Mohammad Mejbahouddin
Belgium	Mr. Van Brandt
El Salvador	Ms. Maria Eulalia Jimenez
Ethiopia	Mr. Gebrehiwot Redal
Haiti	Ms. Suze Percy
Indonesia	Mr. Soendaroe Rachmad
Sierra Leone	H.E. Umaru Bundu-Wurie
United States of America	Mr. Timothy Lavelle
WFP	Mr. Francisco Roque Castro



ANNEX II**Programme of visits for the EB mission to Guatemala and Nicaragua
27 October–7 November 1998****Monday 26 October**

Arrival at Guatemala City, Guatemala

Tuesday 27 October

Visit to community nurseries projects

Meeting with Vice-President and Food Security Cabinet (Ministries of Family, Social Action and Nicaragua Children's Fund)

Presentation of achievements and WFP coordination with government's programmes

Cocktail with government officials, UN agencies and representatives of donor countries

Wednesday 28 October

Visit to beneficiaries of emergency food for returnees and displaced persons in Escuintla

Visit to school children of project assisted by WFP in Escuintla

Thursday 29 October

Visit to the area of Chorti to see food for work activities of the construction of infrastructure project

Visit to soil conservation and agroforestry activities in Minas Arriba

Visit to Minimum Shelters in aldea El Escobillal, and project FIDA where food aid is given for reconstruction of infrastructure in areas previously affected by internal conflict.

Dinner and meeting with representatives of several programmes in the area of Chorti

Friday 30 October

Visit to school breakfast project in Alta Verpaz

Visit to read building project in aldea Chijotom

Presentation of Guatemalan folk ballet

Saturday 31 October

Final briefing on Guatemala visit in Antigua city

Sunday 1 November

Departure to Nicaragua

Monday 2 November

Meeting with WFP staff of the country office and the Regional Bureau

Meeting with United Nations Resident Coordinator and Heads of Agencies

Tuesday 3 November

Meeting with Secretariat of External Cooperation

Meeting with social sector cabinet: Ministers of Education, Family and Social Action



Wednesday 4 November

Visit to municipality of Somoto, water and soil conservation projects, agricultural diversification

Meeting with Mayors of Madriz area and municipalities

Thursday 5 November

Visit to Totogalpa area. Water conservation, small irrigation, and soil conservation.
Children's nutrition centres and school feeding

Visit to health centre in Totogalpa and presentation of joint WFP/UNFPA project

Friday 6 November

Visit to ASDENIC, a local NGO cooperating with WFP

Press conference

Final briefing sessions with cluster staff

Saturday 7 November

Departure from Managua

