

برنامج
الأغذية
العالمي



Programme
Alimentaire
Mondial

World
Food
Programme

Programa
Mundial
de Alimentos

**Executive Board
Third Regular Session**

Rome, 21–25 October 2002

INFORMATION NOTES



Distribution: GENERAL

WFP/EB.3/2002/INF/8

15 October 2002

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS' VISIT TO HAITI

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER VISIT

1. The following members of the World Food Programme Executive Board visited Haiti from 17 to 23 June 2002:
 - H.E. Georges Ruphin, Ambassador, Permanent Representation of Madagascar and current President of the Executive Board;
 - H.E. Mohammad Saeid Noori-Naeini, Ambassador, Permanent Representation of the Islamic Republic of Iran and past President of the WFP Executive Board;
 - Mr Ahmed Hachemi, Counsellor, Republic of Algeria;
 - Mr Mohammad Mejbahuddin, Counsellor, Republic of Bangladesh;
 - Mr Victor Hugo Morales Melendez, Counsellor, Mexico;
 - Mr Rolf Gerber, Minister, Switzerland;
 - Mr Ioan Pavel, Counsellor, Romania;
 - Mr Timothy Lavelle, Humanitarian Affairs Attaché, United States Mission, Rome;
2. Mr Thomas Yanga, Secretary to the Board, represented the WFP Secretariat. Ambassador Ruphin was selected by the group as team leader.
3. The team visited economically disadvantaged areas in Port-au-Prince and Haiti's north and northeast provinces and found that continuing economic stagnation had engendered a growing humanitarian crisis that could lead to renewed outmigration for labour. The team was able to confirm on the ground the findings of both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report that Haiti's social and economic indicators are comparable to those of the poorest countries in the world.
4. Roughly two thirds of the population live in poverty, half of the adults are illiterate, and health services are adjudged to be inadequate to address high infant and maternal mortality and major public health crises, including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and most recently, a polio epidemic.
5. Real per capita gross national product fell at a rate of 2 percent per annum during the 1980s and at 2.5 percent per annum during the 1990s. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the economy further declined by around 2 percent in 2001. But the national-level indicators do not reflect the situation in rural areas, where at present two thirds of the population live, 80 percent of them poor. Social programmes aimed at reducing poverty by improving basic education, health and infrastructure, funded by donors and often implemented directly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have declined in recent years. In short, the team witnessed numerous examples of a serious humanitarian crisis throughout its visit.
6. WFP presently has two basic projects in Haiti: (a) project 6153.00, "Health and Nutrition for Vulnerable Women and Children"; and (b) project 4111.01, "Support to School Canteens in Poverty-Affected Areas" (Port-au-Prince and Haiti's North and Northeast). An HIV/AIDS support project has not commenced for lack of funding. WFP estimated food aid input for Haiti in 2002 is 9,065 mt. Despite the fact that the agricultural and food situation in Haiti has worsened, as acknowledged in the Country Programme, shortfalls in the resourcing of WFP operations in Haiti persist..



7. WFP Haiti presented the team, government officials and its United Nations counterparts with a preliminary review of a recently concluded WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) exercise, conducted jointly with the Haitian National Coordination Office for Food Security (CNSA). The review concludes that some 6.1 million (of Haiti's 7.8 million) people are food insecure, with 2.3 million living in "extreme poverty" and another 3.8 million living below the poverty line. Some 22 percent of Haitians are adjudged to be suffering from chronic malnutrition, with 4.5 percent affected by severe malnutrition. Mission observations nonetheless suggest these levels could be much higher given the dire conditions in which the majority of the population lives.
8. The team benefited from a meeting held with the Minister of Agriculture, at which the agriculture sector's main policies and constraints were highlighted. Among other issues, the Minister mentioned the lack of resources for food production, the problems of desertification and environmental degradation resulting largely from hunger and food insecurity, the lack of infrastructure and resources for irrigated agriculture and the need for agrarian reform and reform in the fishery sector. Government policy in the agriculture sector aims at addressing these and other problems in tandem with efforts to increase food production and food security through a reduction in imports and the generation of foreign currency through exports.

TEAM VISITS AND OBSERVATIONS

9. In Port-au-Prince, the team visited the *École Nationale d'Application* (a government-run primary school with 1,010 students) and *Clinique Communautaire de Martissant* (a health clinic run by the Government and a local NGO), which sees about 130 patients per day. The school in particular functions without electricity or running water, and with an absolute minimum of sanitary facilities (two latrines). Cooking facilities are rudimentary. The team was impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of the school's cadre of teachers, who are doing quite a bit—basically without resources.

VISIT TO HAITI'S NORTH AND NORTHEAST

10. The team visited a government/local NGO-run health clinic in Limonade; Government/Catholic Church-run primary schools in Madeline, Nan Bannan and Milot; a government school in Cap-Haitien city, a government health centre in Jacquesyl; and agriculture projects (road repair, minor irrigation, tree and crop production) in Ferrier, Bail, Savanette and Leroux Cachiman.
12. In general, schools and health centres depend largely on the ingenuity and hard work of the individuals and groups running these institutions. A number of dedicated religious and local civil-sector employees recounted that "times are exceedingly difficult". The team was informed that unemployment/underemployment in many areas of the North/Northeast was at 50 percent or higher. Tourism, an important revenue source, has precipitously declined.
13. Throughout the visit the team observed the deterioration of infrastructure. Food-for-work built roads (and roads in general) lacked basic maintenance. There was, however, considerable enthusiasm at the village level for micro-scale agricultural improvement projects.



14. The team was informed that food imports were increasing every year and that imports to Haiti surpassed US\$1 billion in 2000, whereas Haitian exports were in the order of US\$300 million. Foodstuffs make up a quarter of imports.
15. Upon returning from the trip to the North/Northeast, the team met with the Government's Minister of Planning, who asked WFP to supply 450,000 mt of rice (US\$135 million) over a three-year period, to be monetized by the Government, with the proceeds directed to basic education and school feeding. The Minister cited declining rice production in the Artibonite Valley due to poor irrigation and drainage, which is causing Haiti to import about 200,000 mt of rice commercially.

THE SPECTRE OF HIV/AIDS

16. With explosive migration to the capital over the past several years and a weak health service, the severity of the HIV/AIDS epidemic could become dangerously high—and, without vigilance, is in danger of being underestimated. According to UNAIDS the average national prevalence is around 4.5 percent but can reach levels of as high as 13 percent in certain areas. The team met with Dr Monique Rakotomalala, United Nations Haiti head of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), who, in the absence of reliable statistics, felt that the national average could be as high as 12 percent (population ages 15–49). Whatever the true numbers, the conclusion is that Haiti is generally considered the most severely HIV-affected country in the region.
17. The team felt strongly that food aid levels to Haiti should be maximized. And while Haiti does not fit the standard profile (with the exception of the present drought in the Northwest) of a country in a state of emergency (natural-or civil strife-induced disaster), it is immersed in a humanitarian crisis of major proportions, with no end in sight.

TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The team recommends that:
 - a) WFP Haiti further strengthen linkages with local NGOs and religious groups;
 - b) WFP Haiti step up its advocacy of women's empowerment. The VAM review documented that nearly 40 percent of women heads of household had no legal access to land;
 - c) WFP Haiti commence food activities directed to HIV-affected populations; WFP may wish to consider HIV-targeted projects in Haiti and elsewhere as emergency operations (EMOPs) rather than development undertakings;
 - d) WFP Rome Headquarters intensify efforts to expand the donor base for Haiti, with countries with strong historical linkages to Haiti, with the purpose of increasing donor contributions in the framework of a clear plan of action;
 - e) WFP create a "Friends of Haiti" scheme whereby donors are sensitized about the grave food security situation in the country;
 - f) WFP increase coordination efforts with other United Nations agencies present in Haiti and particularly with WHO and UNESCO;



- g) the United Nations intensify its focus on HIV prevention, including access to voluntary counselling and testing, and access to care for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS;
 - h) given the enormity of the food insecurity problem in Haiti, the WFP country office to remain flexible and open in its targeting of food assistance.
19. There is ample scope for greater collaboration between FAO and WFP, including the intensification of FAO efforts in Haiti. The team was informed that a Special Project on Food Security (SPFS) had recently been signed between the Governments of Cuba and Haiti, and the team looks forward to that project's rapid implementation.

CONCLUSION

20. Throughout the visit the team witnessed many examples of the courage, wisdom and valour of the Haitian people. Creole proverbs in particular are reminders of Haiti's deep well of strength. One says: "*tout maladie gan remed*" ("there is a remedy for all sickness/misfortune"); another, "*chemin long pa tue moun*" ("the longest road does not kill anyone").
21. Finally, the Executive Board members listed above take this opportunity to personally thank the Government of Haiti (including Patrick Saint-Hillaire, First Secretary, Embassy of the Republic of Haiti, Rome); the WFP Rome Secretariat; WFP's Deputy Regional Manager for Latin America, Ms Rosa Antolín; WFP Regional Information Officer, Jordan Dey; WFP Haiti Country Director, Ms Lucia Echeopar; and the entire staff of WFP Haiti, for their tireless efforts in making this trip a most useful and productive endeavour.

