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## **POLICY ISSUES**

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## **AN UPDATE ON WFP INTERVENTIONS IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION**



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\* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Director, PDP:                      Mr S. Samkange                      tel.: 066513-2767

Chief, PDPS:                      Mr S. Were Omamo                      tel.: 066513-2178

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms C. Panlilio, Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This information paper summarizes WFP's policy on measures to prepare for and mitigate the impact of natural disasters and developments in disaster-risk mitigation and provides an update on WFP programmes and actions to support preparedness and mitigation efforts at the global, regional and country levels.

The paper outlines recent global developments in disaster preparedness and mitigation, the context for WFP's disaster preparedness and mitigation work; among these are the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Hyogo Framework for Action. WFP's policy on disaster preparedness and mitigation is outlined, followed by descriptions of its programmes and actions and of the activities of its Headquarters-based Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch and Logistics Service, the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Bureau and the Malawi country office. A pilot initiative to explore the feasibility of using financial instruments to manage risks to livelihoods resulting from drought in Ethiopia is also described. The paper ends with preliminary conclusions for policy, programming, analysis, and capacity strengthening at WFP.

WFP's work in disaster preparedness and mitigation is substantial and of high quality. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch is the WFP focal point for technical aspects of disaster preparedness. The Logistics Service leads the design and implementation of logistics for disaster preparedness and mitigation in WFP and the United Nations system. Other Headquarters units contribute to disaster preparedness and mitigation by supporting regional bureaux and country offices in the design and implementation of initiatives that yield demonstrable benefits.

## DRAFT DECISION\*

The Board takes note of "An Update on WFP Interventions in Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation" (WFP/EB.1/2007/5-B).

\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document (document WFP/EB.1/2007/16) issued at the end of the session.



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## INTRODUCTION

1. A combination of degradation of natural resources, population pressure in fragile areas, weak physical, institutional and human capacity, and increasing climate variability is increasing the risk that humanitarian disasters will result from natural hazards. WFP has frequently demonstrated its ability to respond rapidly and effectively to such disasters. But as a responsible leader in humanitarian relief, WFP tries to reduce the likelihood of natural hazards leading to humanitarian disasters and to reduce the impacts of those that do.
2. This information paper summarizes WFP's policy on measures to prepare for and mitigate the impact of natural disasters and provides an update on WFP's programmes and actions to support global preparedness and mitigation efforts.

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## RECENT GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS IN DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION

3. Sustainable development, poverty reduction, good governance and disaster-risk reduction are increasingly viewed as mutually supportive objectives. Several declarations have emerged in recent years:
  - the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action;
  - the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;
  - the Millennium Declaration of 2000;
  - the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development;
  - the Hyogo Declaration and Hyogo Framework for Action; and
  - the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on United Nations System-Wide Coherence.
4. The emerging consensus is that disaster preparedness and mitigation programmes are significant opportunities to enhance sustainable development: losses from natural disasters can be reduced and the ability of societies to deal with disasters can be improved when action is taken at the national and local levels. The central need is to raise awareness, bring about engagement in preparedness in all parts of society and translate assessment of local risks into protective measures. To achieve these goals, disaster preparedness and mitigation programmes will need priority support through enhanced advocacy, financial backing and national programming. These are central to WFP's approach to disaster prevention and management.

## WFP'S POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION

5. WFP does not have an official policy document on disaster preparedness and mitigation, but "...mitigating the effects of recurring natural disasters in vulnerable areas..." is one of the five priority areas in the Enabling Development Policy (EB.A/99/4-A). In WFP – a humanitarian relief agency that focuses on identifying and addressing structural and non-structural determinants of vulnerability and food insecurity – the forward-looking perspective crucial to disaster preparedness and mitigation is a fundamental part of its approach.
6. The 1999 Enabling Development Policy noted that poor households need to build stocks of assets and preserve them during difficult times. This requires early intervention to prevent distress sales of household assets such as tools, land or livestock and to prevent erosion of human capital. In order to act early, WFP has to plan ahead.
7. The following principles underlie WFP's evolving approach to disaster preparedness and mitigation:
  - (i) In countries prone to recurrent natural disasters, development activities and emergency interventions need to be linked.
  - (ii) Disaster prevention, preparedness, contingency planning and responses need to be integral parts of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).
  - (iii) Disaster mitigation depends on structural and non-structural solutions in several sectors at various levels of national economies.
  - (iv) Mitigation should be a principal objective of projects in disaster-prone areas.
  - (v) Targeting must focus on those who cannot cope with recurrent disasters, not just those who live in disaster-prone areas.
  - (vi) Understanding gender relations in the context of natural disasters is important in disaster-mitigation strategies.
  - (vii) Preservation of livelihoods must be a central goal of disaster-mitigation measures.
8. The Safety Nets Policy of 2004 sets out how WFP's food-based safety nets can facilitate timely responses in shock-prone areas and reduce the need for repeated emergency appeals for recurrent crises; the safety nets also complement policies such as Enabling Development by ensuring that systems are in place to safeguard livelihoods in the event of a shock. By integrating assistance into national social protection strategies, safety nets help to prevent duplication of effort and assist governments in developing sustainable food-assistance systems. A major goal is make such systems stable and predictable, thereby improving incentives for investments that strengthen the capacity of the hungry poor to cope with risk.
9. These principles are reflected in disaster prevention and mitigation at many levels in WFP, as set out in the following paragraphs.



## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND MITIGATION IN WFP

10. Treatment of all of WFP's activities in disaster preparedness and mitigation is beyond the scope of this paper. The range of these activities can be understood, however, by focusing on the Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch (ODAP), the Logistics Service (ODTL), the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Bureau (ODP) and the Malawi country office; the Ethiopia drought insurance pilot project also provides insights into the potential role of financial instruments in disaster management.

### ODAP

11. ODAP was established in 2003 with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness and responsiveness of field and Headquarters units in emergency operations (EMOPs) through improved preparedness. Emergency preparedness and response (EPR) consists of actions and arrangements in anticipation of an emergency to ensure a rapid and effective response. ODAP achieves this by (i) updating WFP's normative guidance, (ii) providing technical and capacity-building support for country offices and regional bureaux, (iii) developing new EPR tools, systems and standards, (iv) facilitating the consolidation and sharing of EPR information and best practices in WFP and (v) supporting and coordinating EPR-related processes at the inter-agency level. Its activities include:
- leadership in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) sub-working group on preparedness and contingency planning;
  - developing new tools and approaches and institutionalizing links with partners;
  - contributing to the IASC Early-Warning Action Report;
  - managing WFP's situation room during breaking crises; and
  - implementing the Strengthening WFP's Disaster Risk Reduction project in compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, with funding from the Swedish Trust Fund, with the aim of developing operational and policy guidance for natural disasters.

### ODTL

12. Effective EPR requires dependable logistics. Two initiatives coordinated by ODTL – the United Nations humanitarian response depots (UNHRDs) and the United Nations logistics cluster – underpin global efforts to enhance logistics capacity in preparation for disasters.
13. In 2000, WFP established the first UNHRD in Brindisi to enhance its rapid-response capacity in emergencies. WFP is replicating the Brindisi model in UNHRDs in Ghana, Dubai, Malaysia and Panama.
14. HRDs facilitate rapid and cost-effective deployment of humanitarian supplies to disaster locations. A UNHRD support office has been set up in Rome to provide a “one-stop-shop” to enable users to obtain services such as free storage, co-location and joint deployment of equipment, standardization of equipment among humanitarian agencies, sharing and lending of equipment and discounts from suppliers through pooled procurement.
15. The objectives of the WFP-coordinated United Nations logistics cluster are to: (i) improve the surge capacity of humanitarian actors by enhancing logistics preparedness and response, (ii) build up inter-agency/inter-cluster collaboration to enhance the



predictability, timeliness and efficiency of operations and (iii) identify and address logistics gaps in humanitarian operations.

16. A global cluster-support cell has been established in Rome. Joint logistics response teams comprising United Nations and other logistics officers are being created to coordinate assessments within 48 hours of the onset of an emergency.
17. Clusters at the country level are activated in accordance with protocols outlined by the global cluster-support cell, taking into account guidance approved by IASC. Cluster activations leave the humanitarian community in a better position for the next crisis because information is shared and cooperation among United Nations and other humanitarian organizations is increased.

## ODP

18. In response to the devastating impacts of droughts, floods, frost, earthquakes, tidal waves and hurricanes in the Latin America and Caribbean region, ODP has been working with governments, other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to enhance capacity to design and implement EPR strategies.
19. ODP's flagship initiative is the Latin America Emergency Preparedness and Response Network (LACERN) of partner governments, United Nations agencies and NGOs. It operates under an ODP special operation (SO) to ensure prompt and cost-effective delivery to disaster areas of pre-positioned ready-to-eat rations and emergency equipment from the hub in Panama and three depots in Barbados, El Salvador and Ecuador. Through LACERN, WFP provides partners with technical support services for managing food-based responses to emergencies.
20. The LACERN hub and depots are associated with an emergency management centre that allows WFP and its partners to share experiences, information and operational data to optimize responses. Shared services include (i) logistics and warehouse management, (ii) food procurement, (iii) vulnerability analysis and emergency needs assessments (ENAs) and (iv) operational and financial management of food-aid emergency interventions.
21. A regional EMOP was recently designed to complement LACERN by procuring and pre-positioning 450 mt of high-energy biscuits (HEB) that will be distributed equally among the depots. Stocks will be managed under LACERN and will be part of WFP's immediate food response in an emergency. HEB are pre-positioned in sub-regional depots in response to (i) a common desire to respond immediately to sudden crises as part of the objective of increasing collective capacity for such response in the region, and (ii) a need to be cost-effective by avoiding payment of the high transaction costs and prices typically associated with disaster responses.
22. The initiative only covers procurement and pre-positioning of HEB stocks, but the strategy and mode of implementation are regulated by LACERN mechanisms. The HEB will be drawn down, distributed and replenished according to standard WFP targeting and distribution modalities.

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## FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

23. WFP's Special Projects Branch (OEDSP) and the World Bank are collaborating on a weather-based insurance pilot project to provide monetary compensation to Ethiopian farmers and protect them against drought risk. The first phase in 2004–2006 demonstrated that Ethiopian rainfall data are accurate and timely enough to allow Ethiopian drought risk to be transferred to international re-insurance markets. Establishment of a US\$7.1 million insurance policy demonstrated the willingness of international markets to contract on the basis of the Ethiopian data. On the basis of these outcomes and of experience in the first phase, WFP, the World Bank and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) started to develop a comprehensive drought-risk financing scheme for the 5–8 million Ethiopians subject to transitory food insecurity. The second phase aims to scale up the financing package to US\$135 million, comprising contingent funding from bilateral, multilateral and insurance sources. In a related development, the World Bank approved a US\$175 million safety-net operation for Ethiopia that includes a US\$25 million contingent grant based on the drought index designed by WFP.

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## WFP MALAWI

24. As noted above, WFP's mitigation interventions aim to moderate the effects of recurring natural disasters. The interventions – across WFP they were valued at US\$440 million in 2005 – help households and communities to shift to sustainable livelihoods, improve productivity and prevent degradation of natural resources; they include measures to support shifts to sustainable management of natural resources and to stabilize areas subject to slow resource degradation. Support for disaster preparedness and mitigation by national governments is crucial. The approach of the Malawi country office to disaster preparedness and mitigation is an excellent illustration of these approaches, which are being adopted by other country offices.
25. Floods and drought are common in Malawi. National systems for disaster prevention, preparedness and response are weak. To address this situation, the country office is involved in advocacy, policy dialogue, technical support and capacity-building to enhance Malawi's ability to prepare for and cope with natural disasters.
26. The Malawi country office is a significant player in Malawi's nascent social-protection system: it has developed partnerships with the Famine Early-Warning System Network (FEWS-NET), the Meteorological Department, the Department of Poverty and Disaster Management Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, regional vulnerability assessment committees (VACs) and the Malawi VAC, and with joint crop and food supply assessment missions by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). These entities share information and experience to inform decision-making on interventions before, during and after a disaster. The country office chairs the United Nations/Red Cross disaster-management working group.
27. The vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) unit in the country office conducts vulnerability and baseline analyses of coping strategies and hazard analysis and mapping to develop and track indicators in anticipation of disasters.
28. The VAM unit contributes to the Malawi VAC, which consists of representatives of the Government, inter-governmental organizations, academics and NGOs; it carries out





assessments of food entitlement gaps in different livelihood zones and the interventions needed to fill them.

29. The country office has posted a staff member in the Department of Poverty and Disaster Management Affairs to help to build capacity to monitor, evaluate and manage relief interventions. During the 2005–2006 crisis, the department applied WFP’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, which ensured harmonized M&E for all interventions.
30. Food-based interventions aimed at promoting environmental conservation and improved management of natural resources are prominent in the approach to disaster mitigation. Interventions include food-for-assets (FFA) and food-for-work (FFW) schemes for soil and water conservation and making compost for manure.
31. To maintain supplies in the rainy season in areas with poor roads, significant volumes of food are drawn from WFP warehouses and pre-positioned. A small fleet of WFP trucks helps to reduce breaks in food supplies to areas that would otherwise be unable to access food.
32. The country office has developed a “sleeping” EMOP and SO that can be activated at any time to assist flood victims with immediate food needs, protect livelihoods and build people’s resilience to subsequent shocks, using activities of the kinds described above.
33. A major objective for the country office and its partners is to establish a coordinated disaster-management system and build related capacity at all levels. This is in line with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which calls for greater efforts to reduce the number and effects of disasters, and the Hyogo Framework for Action, which calls for development partners to integrate disaster risk reduction into their assistance programmes.

## CONCLUSIONS

34. WFP’s work in preparing for and mitigating natural disasters is substantial. ODAP is the focal point for technical aspects of disaster preparedness; ODTL leads design and implementation of logistics work that promotes disaster preparedness and mitigation in WFP and for the United Nations system. Headquarters-based units such as the Social Protection and Livelihoods Service (PDPS) and the Emergencies and Transitions Unit (PDPT) contribute to disaster preparedness and mitigation by supporting country offices in programme design and implementation. These include FFW and FFA initiatives to moderate the effects of recurring natural disasters; cash-based initiatives are being piloted. These interventions help households and communities to shift to sustainable livelihoods, improve productivity and prevent loss or degradation of assets; they include support for shifts to sustainable natural-resource management and stabilization of areas subject to resource degradation. WFP’s support for governments in their disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts is crucial, particularly through VAM and logistics.
35. With support from Sweden, however, WFP is developing:
  - (i) operational and policy guidance for natural disasters;
  - (ii) a strategy for compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action;
  - (iii) technical support to ensure continuous M&E in natural disasters;
  - (iv) guidance for regional bureaux and country offices on the technical, institutional and policy aspects of disaster preparedness and mitigation and social protection;



- (v) arrangements to strengthen partnerships at all levels; and
  - (vi) a plan to develop disaster preparedness and mitigation capacities in Headquarters, regional bureaux and country offices, with an emphasis on integration with existing and planned disaster management and social-protection programmes.
36. It is important to recognize that individual countries are primarily responsible for sustainable development and for measures to prepare for and mitigate disasters. Given increasing global interdependence and international cooperation on disaster reduction, an enabling environment for developing knowledge, capacities and motivation is within reach. To find ways to respond to these challenges, WFP will need to exploit its extensive field presence, its ability to act rapidly on information from disparate sources and its ability to engage with national policy processes individually and in partnership with other United Nations agencies. Its work will reflect inter-governmental and inter-agency agreements and coordination mechanisms to increase the coherence of action on disaster preparedness and mitigation.



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## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| DFID     | Department for International Development (United Kingdom) |
| EMOP     | emergency operation                                       |
| ENA      | emergency needs assessment                                |
| EPR      | emergency preparedness and response                       |
| FAO      | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations   |
| FEWS-NET | Famine Early-Warning System Network                       |
| FFA      | food for assets   |
| FFW      | food for work   |
| HEB      | high-energy biscuits                                      |
| IASC     | Inter-Agency Standing Committee                           |
| ISDR     | International Strategy for Disaster Reduction             |
| LACERN   | Latin America Emergency Preparedness and Response Network |
| M&E      | monitoring and evaluation                                 |
| NGO      | non-governmental organization                             |
| ODAP     | Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch                |
| ODP      | Latin America and Caribbean Regional Bureau               |
| ODTL     | Logistics Service   |
| OEDSP    | Special Projects Branch                                   |
| PDP      | Policy, Strategy and Programme Support Division           |
| PDPS     | Social Protection and Livelihoods Service                 |
| PDPT     | Emergencies and Transitions Unit                          |
| SO       | special operation   |
| UNDAF    | United Nations Development Assistance Framework           |
| UNEP     | United Nations Environmental Programme                    |
| UNHRD    | United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot                |
| VAC      | vulnerability assessment committee                        |
| VAM      | vulnerability analysis and mapping                        |