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WFP AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Issues and priorities

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for consideration to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

Chief, SPP:	Ms. D. Spearman	tel.: 066513-2601
Senior Advisor:	Ms. D. Hines	tel.: 066513-2233

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 066513-2641).

INTRODUCTION

1. Environmental problems are causing indisputable and immediate harm to the health and livelihoods of the world's poorest people, mostly in developing countries. The magnitude of environmental threats, and the recognition that it is far cheaper to avoid environmental damage today than to fix problems tomorrow (World Bank, 1998; UNHCR, 1997), have prompted bilateral and multilateral development agencies to develop Environmental Assessment (EA) procedures and to encourage the evolution of national environmental policies. However, many developing countries do not have capacity to apply adequately EA procedures or enforce environmental policies and standards. To respond to these realities, *reversing destructive environmental practices* has been highlighted as one of five donor development goals for the year 2015 (World Bank, 1998; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 1997).

2. This goal is as valid for recovery and relief interventions as it is for development activities, considering that natural and human-induced environmental degradation undermine the economic and productive bases of communities. Failure to achieve this goal will continue to result in a vicious cycle of poverty, loss of productive assets, food insecurity, malnutrition, displacement and social instability. Women are particularly affected as they are the main providers of water, fuel, fodder and forest products. Environmental degradation from natural disasters, soil erosion, declining soil fertility, desertification and reduction of biological diversity has displaced over 25 million persons, mostly in the African Sahel, the Horn of Africa and the South-Asian sub-continent (International Organization for Migration, 1996). The prevention of unsustainable natural resource management practices—an important element in WFP's development portfolio representing over 45 percent of development expenditures—is crucial for mitigating environmental impact and safeguarding food security.

3. Complex emergencies also exacerbate environmental degradation. Human conflict has displaced about 35 million people, both refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 30 low- and middle-income countries (UNHCR, 1997). Mass influxes of populations present a threat to the food security of host communities, as food supply is closely linked to available natural resources. Access to already strained resources—which are unable to withstand heavy, unexpected increases in demand—creates tension, instability and competition between host and displaced populations.

4. During the last decade WFP has undertaken a number of initiatives to address environmental concerns in both its relief and development interventions. These include incorporating the consideration of environmental issues in its programme design manual, presenting a paper to the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) on sustainable development (CFA: 27/P/INF/2, 1989), and an examination of issues through case studies—*WFP Interventions in the Field of Natural Resources: Case Study Linking Relief and Development* (with FAO participation) and participation in the UNHCR project—*Towards Sustainable Environmental Management Practices in Refugee-Affected Areas (*TSEMPRAA).

5. WFP supports inter-agency coordination of environmental responses by participating in the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. WFP promotes the goals of Agenda 21, in particular Chapter 34, by helping poor communities adopt sustainable coping strategies and by addressing environmental concerns in relief and development. WFP supports the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, in particular

Commitment Three, Objective 3.2, by promoting initiatives to combat environmental threats to food security in recovery and development. WFP is working closely with UNHCR and other partners to develop a better understanding of environmental threats and prevention measures, for example through the TSEMPRAA project which aims to produce environmental training materials based on the previously mentioned case studies. Support by donors and partners will allow WFP to more systematically avoid environmental damage, implement prevention and mitigation measures, and promote environmental benefits.

6. The purpose of this paper is to summarize policy and operational issues faced by WFP when integrating environmental concerns in its operations. It identifies key environmental issues relevant to WFP food-assisted operations and reviews pertinent donor/partner concerns and environmental assessment requirements. The paper identifies procedures that will allow WFP to strategically respond to identified environmental risks, for example, considering energy issues when determining the composition of the food basket, applying environmental review procedures, and promoting environmentally-friendly procurement and recycling.

LESSONS LEARNED

7. Background work for this paper included a review of: the current literature on environment and food security; the legal and procedural requirements for environmental assessment currently applied by FAO, IFAD, UNHCR, the World Bank, and the development agencies of Australia, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, the OECD, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States; WFP evaluation documents; the above-mentioned case studies; and a WFP survey of environmental legislation and concerns pertinent to Official Development Assistance. It also reflects extensive meetings and contacts with environmental specialists in these agencies, and with WFP staff at headquarters and in country offices.

8. The review highlighted the links among food security, improving the livelihoods of the poorest and environmental protection. Many donors and multilateral agencies have responded by requiring some level of environmental assessment when considering support to infrastructure and natural resource management activities. Humanitarian assistance is increasingly required to consider environmental impact. The review also highlighted the importance of designing technically sound activities to ensure that the poorest are not further marginalized by proposed activities. The issues raised are not restricted to WFP interventions, but are common to most relief and development efforts.

9. The following lessons were identified as critical for formulating an environmentally-sound WFP programming response.

Lesson 1. Displaced persons and influxes of populations pose food security threats

10. Mass influxes of populations present a threat to the food security of host communities, as food supply is closely linked to available natural resources. The cost to the host country to supply needed subsistence resources to those seeking refuge is largely underestimated and often ignored. There is a need for WFP to link up with government agencies directly charged with environmental policy issues in order to facilitate the implementation of prevention and mitigation programmes.

The annual cost to the Government of Mali of local water and fuelwood supplied to Mauritanian refugees is about one million dollars[1] (WFP Mali Case Study, 1996). In Kenya, the figure is estimated to be around 10.5 million dollars annually (WFP Kenya Case Study, 1996). These figures do not consider indirect environmental impact such as accelerated decrease in forest cover, degradation of rangelands from refugees' livestock or the decrease in soil fertility as a result of more intensive agricultural practices.

Lesson 2. Environmental screening is required for development

11. The WFP survey of donor requirements identified that a number of donor organizations require routine screening of proposed development projects to estimate the probable type and magnitude of potential adverse impacts and to ensure that people's coping mechanisms are safeguarded. Projects are subsequently assigned to a category of desired environmental analysis (ranging from mandatory preparation of an EA, to limited or preliminary environmental review, to EA exemptions). Most WFP development projects fall into the category requiring preliminary or limited assessment, not a full-scale Environmental Assessment. Even limited assessment requires greater attention to incorporating systematic review procedures into activity identification and programme design.

***Several aid agencies expect multilateral organizations to carry out effective assessment and mitigation of environmental risks.* WFP Survey of Donor Requirements, 1998.**

Lesson 3. Relief operations are increasingly subject to environmental review

12. Recent experiences have shown that there is a high probability that refugees and internally displaced people will contribute to deforestation, land degradation and water contamination in areas of asylum, many of which are in least developed countries (LDCs).[2] As a result, donors are applying greater scrutiny to longer-term relief and recovery efforts and large-scale food aid operations, even though previously emergency operations have been exempt from environmental review. Increasingly, relief interventions are expected to include some level of environmental analysis

(e.g., AusAID, CIDA, the European Union and SIDA) to ensure that the resource base of host populations is not jeopardized. While the capacity to review and mitigate

[1] All monetary values are expressed in United States dollars.

[2] Jacobsen, K., *The Impact of Refugees on the Environment: A Review of the Evidence*, 1994.

refugee/IDP-related environmental stresses is improving, it is not sufficient in all agencies or operations.

UNHCR recently adopted an environmental policy and accompanying operational guidelines that commits it to addressing environmental concerns. These procedures require an environmental focal point or specialist on the emergency team, establishment of a local environmental task force and development of an Environmental Action Plan that appraises measures to mitigate adverse environmental impacts. UNHCR, 1997.

Lesson 4. Food basket items, particularly their type and age, affect fuel requirements and resource use

13. Food commodities have been implicated in two environmental issues—overcutting of trees and brush to obtain needed fuelwood; and the expansion of cropped areas and unrestricted grazing to secure additional food. Studies have shown that the relationship between commodity type, age, cooking requirements and degradation of natural resources is complex, situation-specific and requires further investigation (WFP, 1997; and UNHCR, 1998). Cooking time and the corresponding fuel requirement are clearly related to the type and age of food items given. For example, under optimal conditions fresh beans require a 24-hour soaking period and take 90 minutes of cooking time compared to lentils/split peas which require no soaking and 45 minutes average cooking time. Old beans can take up to three hours or more to cook. Since fuelwood is an often-used energy source, WFP has adopted prevention practices to guard against deforestation by seeking to provide milled grains, promoting more efficient cooking methods, and avoiding the purchase of old food stocks which require longer cooking time.

14. WFP's manual—*Food Aid in Emergencies, Policies and Principles,* 1991—states that beneficiaries should be assured adequate cooking fuel and, when fuel is scarce, preference should be given to the provision of quick-cooking commodities. Although WFP has taken actions to increase the use of pre-cooked, blended or milled rations, neither the Programme nor its major partners have routinely addressed the fuel issue. Estimating fuel energy requirements for cooking the food provided and for assuring that fuel supplies are adequate must be done routinely. In refugee and internally displaced person situations where there is a high probability of deforestation or land degradation, special care needs to be taken in designing the food basket to minimize the need for cooking fuel.

In Malawi deforestation is taking place at an alarming rate with grave consequences for the local population"…fuelwood shortages may mean an eight-hour walk to gather wood or cutting back on cooking and risking a deterioration of refugees' nutritional status. WFP and the Environment, 1995.

Lesson 5. Stronger inter-agency coordination is needed during relief and recovery

15. The lack of clear leadership and effective coordination of environmental activities in relief and rehabilitation operations continues to undermine efforts to reduce environmental impacts (UNHCR 1997). Inter-agency coordination is required to ensure that efforts are directed towards introducing best practices to mitigate environmental damage. The provision of cooking fuel is one area where lack of coordination is most noticeable.

Although great efforts are made to meet basic human requirements…food is supplied but the fuel to cook it is not. The assumption has always been that the host environment will provide the needed fuel.[1] However, this is often not feasible.

Lesson 6. Technical expertise helps to avoid environmental threats

16. Natural resource and asset-creation development activities pose environmental risks if not designed and implemented according to accepted technical standards. The most problematic components in WFP programmes are (in approximate descending order of importance): (1) construction and rehabilitation of roads; (2) irrigation and drainage works; (3) soil conservation structures; (4) agricultural intensification; and (5) forestry/watershed and rangeland management. Greater capacity is needed to address potential environmental and prevention issues.

Badly designed and executed roads or tracks often end up creating more erosion and making access even more hazardous. WFP Ethiopia Case Study, 1997. Major constraints to environmentally-sound projects include:

- **limited duration and staffing of appraisal missions to adequately evaluate environmental considerations;**
- **overestimation of the capacity of government agency staff to provide the needed technical supervision/implementation or extension services;**
- **the assumption that maintenance will be provided once food aid is withdrawn; and**
- **the general lack of technical skills in natural resource management and EA within WFP and often in counterpart agencies.**

Lesson 7. WFP country offices require guidance on the use and disposal of chemicals

17. Chemicals hazardous to human health and the environment are commonly used to protect stored food commodities or crops. Fumigation of stored foods is routinely carried out on ships during transport and in storage facilities at the port of entry. Methyl bromide (a grain

[1] Kimani, M., *Meeting Energy Requirements in Refugee Situations: A Case Study in Household and Institutional Energy Interventions in Goma, Zaire and Dadaab, Kenya*. Nairobi, 1995.

fumigant) is highly toxic and will eventually be phased out, in accordance with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (1987). Fertilizers and pesticides for agricultural intensification and forestry projects and insecticides for control of disease-carrying vectors in refugee settlements also pose environmental risks. In emergency situations, the widespread introduction of highly toxic and inappropriate pesticides, sometimes expired or nearly so, can result in significant quantities remaining unused without proper storage for years.

18. FAO has developed best practices on the distribution, use, packaging, storage and disposal of pesticides that are followed by most bilateral and multilateral agencies. These practices are not widely known in many countries; thus, WFP will need to ensure that its country offices and government counterparts have access to relevant information on use, disposal and alternatives to using hazardous chemicals.

Technicians from government services usually handle hazardous chemicals and follow the relevant FAO regulations. As some countries are not able to ensure the safe use of hazardous chemicals (FAO, 1996) WFP is faced with assuring that hazardous chemicals used for food storage and crop protection are carefully selected and used.

Lesson 8. Recycling and green procurement procedures are needed throughout WFP

19. Many WFP country offices (e.g., India and Ecuador) have developed efficient recycling and environmentally-friendly procurement practices. In some countries the necessary infrastructure for recycling is not in place, while in others procedures have not been adopted. Recycling or proper disposal of solid wastes from large quantities of food packaging materials (tins, plastic bags) is a concern, as these materials can cause pollution, become breeding sites for disease vectors and reduce the efficiency of operations. “Green” purchasing (e.g., purchase of recycled paper and energy-saving office equipment), is a United Nations priority with recommendations issued to United Nations agencies through the Green Office Initiative, UNDP, 1995. WFP needs to find creative ways to adopt suggested Green Office measures, without unduly burdening country office or headquarters staff.

The disposal of the empty gunny bags, tins, pails, drums and cartons has resulted in generation of additional funds, better upkeep of the storage godown and space for storing food items. WFP India Country Programme, 1997.

WFP’S RESPONSE: ENVIRONMENTALLY-SOUND PROCEDURES

20. WFP is committed to environmentally-sustainable interventions in relief, recovery and development. Based upon the lessons learned, WFP will adopt the procedures discussed below and systematically introduce sound environmental practices in its operations. The procedures are based on the premise that it is more effective to build environmental

elements into WFP interventions from the beginning. As a result, they focus on the prevention of environmental threats to livelihoods rather than on rehabilitation.

Food basket

21. The composition of the food basket was identified as the "single biggest determinant of energy consumption in refugee and IDP situations" (UNHCR, 1997). As a consequence, considerable attention has been given to the issue of domestic energy supply in refugee and internally displaced person operations, and options for reducing the environmental and financial implications of meeting energy requirements. Natural resource degradation is an inevitable consequence of population influxes, generating impacts for both the displaced and host populations. Displaced groups tend to exhibit high energy demands, combined with a limited knowledge of local supply and yield regimes. "*Refugee per capita rates of energy consumption tend to exceed those of local communities, at least initially, and they are more likely to cause environmental damage in their search for fuel—particularly when that fuel is firewood* (UNHCR, 1998)."

22. Studies by WFP and UNHCR demonstrated that it is more cost-effective to limit fuel demand than to introduce supply measures, and that prevention of environmental destruction is preferred to rehabilitation, given the "prohibitive" costs of the latter. Studies also stressed the link between nutritional status, the ration and fuel sources. In Kenya, for example, refugees compromised their nutritional status by selling food rations in order to purchase fuel and in Tanzania refugees skipped meals because of the unavailability of cooking fuel (WFP Case Study, 1997; and GTZ ,1995).

23. WFP will seek, particularly in relief operations, to:

a) Reduce energy consumption by considering relevant energy issues when determining the composition of the food basket

The food needs of beneficiaries are of primary concern. Commodity recommendations would be based on the nutritional status of beneficiaries and the cultural appropriateness of the food items, after which, the availability of cooking fuels and the need to minimize the energy used for cooking will be factored in. In order to reduce energy consumption and the demand for local firewood, WFP can consider a range of options, including: a) the provision of pre-cooked blended foods in place of beans for children under five, reducing the cooking time from 45 minutes to five minutes; b) providing local milling facilities in camp situations; c) providing finer-milled grains; d) partially substituting soya-fortified foods, reducing the need for pulses; and e) as appropriate, introducing energy-saving technologies, for example, the partial pre-cooking of cereals and pulses with infra-red radiation—a process that does not change the physical characteristics of the food.

b) Undertake an energy assessment and an analysis of environmental risks as part of refugee and IDP needs assessments. WFP will participate actively in joint energy needs assessments with UNHCR and FAO to identify the requirements for cooking fuel and fuel-saving technologies. When such joint assessments do not take place, such as for IDP operations, WFP will work with other partners to ensure that energy issues are considered.

The Programme will take special care in designing the food basket to assure that food requirements are secured and that potential environmental impacts are minimized. This is especially important in arid or ecologically fragile regions, or when large numbers of people are concentrated near protected lands.

Needs assessments, with an analysis of energy issues, would examine: composition of the food basket, ration size, duration of assistance, availability of fuels, ability of beneficiaries to procure fuel, and status and fragility of the surrounding natural resource base. WFP will also ensure that its assessment teams have the capacity to estimate fuel energy requirements for cooking the food it provides.

c) Identify specific measures to mitigate adverse environmental impacts as part of the needs assessment process.

Prevention measures would be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and may include: provision of cash to ensure that the nutritional status of beneficiaries is not negatively affected by the need to purchase fuel (only in selected refugee and IDP situations); rations for tree planting; organization of community kitchens (studies have shown that cooking for a group of seven to eight people is optimal) or canteens in the case of school feeding projects; and education on fuel-saving approaches such as pre-soaking, pounding and recommended cooking times for various commodities.

d) Actively seek out partners for the financing and implementation of identified prevention measures.

In those situations where UNHCR or UNICEF are partners, WFP would work with the respective partner to secure needed inputs, including fuel- and energy-efficient cooking items. The memoranda of understanding (MOU) with these partners will be re-examined to clarify which agency has the lead for obtaining cooking fuel. In situations involving IDPs, and where partners are not available to meet the cost of energy-efficient items and mitigating related environmental impacts, WFP would fund such items as a direct operational cost.

e) Purchase commodities which are nutritionally, culturally and environmentally appropriate when WFP procures commodities through open-market purchases, local purchases or triangular transactions.

f) Assume responsibility for mobilizing the necessary resources for milling and provide milling facilities to the beneficiaries where feasible. In the early stages of emergency situations, for environmental reasons, it is generally preferable to provide flour. If whole grain is provided, the ration should include compensation for milling costs (an additional 10 to 20 percent in commodity), if these costs are borne by the beneficiaries.

Where beneficiaries are totally dependent on food aid, WFP would secure the provision of blended foods or other fortified commodities in order to prevent or correct micronutrient deficiencies. In particular, WFP would promote with its partners blended foods which have cost and environmental advantages: short cooking time, lower fuel costs, flexibility in preparation and reduced transport costs.

g) Implement the understanding it has with donors that—in the case of in-kind donations—minimum quality commodity standards will be met. Donors are also encouraged to provide commodities that meet the environmental circumstances of specific operations.

WFP will pay particular attention to ensure that commodities of appropriate standard and age are distributed where increased fuel use will pose environmental threats.

h) Promote, with its partners, the use on site of modified low-maintenance maize mills, in emergency operations involving large concentrations of people and where long-term management capacity is available. Milling can also improve nutrition in camps (the

maize meal can be fortified at little extra cost) as well as significantly reduce the workload of women and adverse environmental impacts.

Environmental review

24. The preparation of formal, full-scale EAs is not usually needed for WFP interventions, as WFP generally assists small-scale asset creation activities. To ascertain that interventions are low-risk, WFP would initiate a review process at the earliest stage of the programming cycle. The review would pay particular attention to the management of identified risks and be based on simple checklists, designed for use with a minimum of specialized technical input. It would provide an overview of how an activity might affect the environment, identify measures to increase environmental benefits as well as prevent impact, and recommendations on the need for further scrutiny. WFP would arrange for the conduct of a more in-depth assessment in those circumstances where a formal EA is required.

25. WFP will:

a) Routinely conduct a preliminary review of programme activities in infrastructure, public works and natural resource management sub-programmes considered to hold medium-to-high environmental risks. The Annex lists activities and associated risks.

b) *Government counterparts, NGOs and staff of specialized agencies would be contacted to assist with this preliminary screening. This screening will consider the likely scale, type and significance of the environmental risks, with special focus on impacts in ecologically fragile locations (e.g., arid or semi-arid lands, wetlands, tropical forests and protected areas).* Provide for any necessary follow-up according to the findings of the review. If the review identifies potential adverse environmental impacts, the mission would identify prevention measures and recommend further analysis.

For those activities identified as having a "significant risk", a follow-up mission would be undertaken to develop feasible, site-specific mitigation measures. WFP would seek appropriate technical expertise from specialized and other agencies (FAO, UNHCR, UNDP), and local sources, including government counterparts and NGOs. Annual technical reviews/quality checks related to environmental matters would also be conducted as appropriate.

c) Include an environmental section in all mission terms of reference (TOR). Standard TORs would be developed in the guidelines for the implementation of this policy for use by all relief, recovery and development missions. Mission findings would become part of the respective programme documents.

WFP's partners will be expected to comply with the environmental review process, including the use of TORs that specify environmental issues to be addressed, and the involvement of appropriate natural resource or environmental experts. WFP will incorporate these concerns in the memoranda of understanding (MOU) with its partners.

d) For high-risk activities, such as roads in mountainous areas, evaluation missions would examine whether adverse environmental effects have arisen. Missions will evaluate the effectiveness of the environmental review process and the prevention/mitigation measures adopted. Appropriate indicators would be developed to enable corrective and timely action in case of adverse effects.

e) Train WFP staff in the regional clusters and in selected high-risk countries in environmental review procedures.

Environmentally-friendly procurement and recycling

26. WFP would promote environmental stewardship within its operations at headquarters and in the field by adopting environmentally-responsible procurement and recycling, consistent with the UNDP Inter-Agency Procurement Services Office recommendations (the Green Office Initiative, 1995). Awareness-building would be an important element in generating commitment to recycling and green procurement. WFP would comply with this initiative to the extent feasible and changes would gradually be incorporated in relevant WFP manuals. Specifically:

a) Recycled paper products and environmentally-friendly office equipment should be purchased and used to the extent possible, particularly at headquarters. Regional and country offices would be encouraged to follow this practice.

When computers, printers and photocopiers are purchased, data on their energy consumption and emissions would be examined, and preference be given to products carrying ecological labels. Priority would be given to vendors who offer environmentally-friendly items, all other factors being equal.

b) WFP would recycle office paper used at headquarters and encourage similar efforts in field offices, allowing for the required infrastructure to be in place (paper collection and recycling operations). Efforts would be made to ensure proper disposal of solid wastes that accumulate from large quantities of food packaging materials (tins, plastic bags). Besides being unsightly, these materials can cause pollution and become breeding sites for disease vectors.

c) The purchase, use and application of potentially hazardous chemicals should be minimized to the extent possible, taking into consideration the need to prevent infestations or losses of stored food commodities. Attempts would be made to eliminate the use of ozone-depleting substances controlled under the Montreal Protocol, particularly methyl bromide which is used for grain fumigation.

WFP will comply with relevant international guidelines on pesticides, including FAO's International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (updated in 1991), and its Guidelines for Packaging and Storage of Pesticides, Good Labelling Practice for Pesticides and Disposal of Waste Pesticide and Pesticide Containers on the Farm (1985). Chemicals classified as being extremely or highly hazardous by the World Health Organization (Classes IA and IB) will not be used unless no other alternatives exist.

d) Continued examination of innovative logistical operations to reduce the use of fumigants, packaging materials and food bags would be investigated. There are two approaches that merit field trials. One is to transport bulk grain (instead of the more fragile flour) to points further along the transport chain and to mill nearer to the destination point. A second option is to use hermetically-sealed storage containers which remove pests by asphyxiation, thus reducing the use of fumigants.

e) Seed provision programmes in development and recovery projects may cause adverse effects on biodiversity. The main unintended impact is the undermining of genetic variability through the widespread introduction of inappropriate varieties over large areas. Introduced varieties may reduce the incentive for farmers to maintain local varieties.

When seeds are procured by FAO or other partners and distributed by or used in WFP-assisted activities, WFP would collaborate with FAO and other informed parties

to avoid adverse effects on local genetic resources. WFP would support preventative measures, including: notifying the country's genetic resource conservation programme when non-local varieties are widely distributed; and, when applicable, ensuring consistency with national biodiversity action plans and the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

Where deemed appropriate and feasible, WFP would support FAO in its efforts to mitigate adverse impacts and to support the conservation of biodiversity with, for example, food-for-work programmes to help maintain local varieties which are essential for assuring household food security.

Strengthening Partnerships

27. WFP requires technical support in designing and implementing activities with environmental risks. Rather than "re-invent the wheel" in an area that is replete with guidelines, procedures and checklists, the Programme would tap into the operational experience acquired by other agencies. WFP would need also to develop an understanding of local capacities. In addition, WFP would address environmental concerns through coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Common Strategic Framework or the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) whenever possible. Furthermore:

a) Existing information and materials would be used and tailored to WFP's mandate and capabilities. In preparing recovery programmes and designing activities, experts would be drawn from other agencies such as FAO and UNDP. WFP will continue to work closely with UNHCR on environmental issues, including efforts to develop environmental training materials for staff and to review sustainable environmental management practices in refugee-affected areas.

b) In relief and recovery situations, WFP would work with partners to identify areas/regions prone to environmental degradation and address related environmental issues.

WFP would participate in proactive environmental projects, such as the pilot environmental management scheme proposed for Malawi in formerly refugee-impacted areas. The Programme would work with other agencies' environmental staff (UNHCR environmental officers) when they are in place. In high-risk situations WFP may designate its own environmental liaison officer in order to improve linkages with partners.

c) "Obligations of the Government/Implementing Partners" in WFP agreement documents would require partners to conform with national environmental standards and environmental treaties. At a minimum, partners should commit to preventing or mitigating adverse environmental impacts arising from their activities and to carrying out the requisite monitoring and reporting.

Agreements/MOUs with NGOs will be updated to reflect any new arrangements and responsibilities associated with WFP's environmental procedures. WFP's NGO partners would be expected to apply the same standards of environmental care as required of WFP and its donors.

Capacity-building

28. Within WFP, the primary responsibility for environmental review would rest with the country offices, which would rely on external support from specialized agencies or local experts. Sectoral experts or environmental specialists on programme/project preparation and needs assessment missions would follow standard terms of reference covering important environmental issues and simple-to-use, tailored checklists for environmental reviews. Sectoral checklists of impacts and mitigation measures, TORs and reference documents providing "best management practices" would be prepared by WFP as a follow-up guideline to this document. The guideline would be provided to all missions to facilitate the environmental review process.

29. WFP staff will be trained on the use of the guideline. Staff capacity will also be enhanced through joint training with UNHCR through their country-level environmental training programme and with other partners when feasible. When appropriate WFP may assist in beneficiary training programmes on topics such as improved cooking practices.

Funding implications

30. WFP is committed to the environmental procedures outlined in the document. While the approach is considered to be feasible given the Programme's resource and staff capacities, translating this commitment into systematic action will require financial resources. Staff time also will be required to integrate environmental elements in all WFP operations.

31. For emergency operations, funding for environmental prevention activities would be requested through the United Nations Consolidated Appeal and other appeal processes. For recovery operations, WFP would assess the associated costs during the formulation of the recovery programme. Programme-specific environmental activity costs would be funded through direct operational costs, enabling WFP to ensure a consistent approach in its efforts to prevent environmental damage.

32. During the formulation of a development programme, the costs of environmental actions would be assessed and these costs would be funded as part of that programme's direct operational costs. The inclusion of relevant experts on country programme missions may result in an increase in overall mission costs, which would be reflected in the direct operational cost budget of the country programme.

33. WFP would like to accelerate the implementation of this policy, particularly the normative aspects—for example, staff training. There are a number of areas where WFP could use additional financial support for such PSA-type activities. Selected donors have the facility to fund environmentally related activities and WFP will seek to secure such funds to assist in mainstreaming environmental initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

34. The Executive Board is invited to endorse the stance taken by WFP on the issues raised in this environmental policy and the responses developed to address the concerns of WFP and its partners. WFP's responses include that:

a) For emergency operations, funding for environmental prevention activities be through the United Nations Consolidated Appeal and other appeal processes. The costs of environmental prevention and rehabilitation activities in recovery and development programmes would be funded as direct operational costs.

b) WFP take special care in designing the food basket to assure that food requirements are met and to minimize potential environmental impacts and, as appropriate, take measures to assure that cooking fuel needs are assessed and met.

c) In situations involving IDPs, and where partners are not available to meet the costs of providing energy-efficient items and reducing related environmental impacts, WFP may fund such items as direct operational costs.

d) For in-kind donations, there is an understanding with donors that minimum quality standards would be met. WFP would pay particular attention to ensure that commodities of appropriate standard and age are distributed in situations where increased fuel use will pose environmental threats. Donors are also encouraged to provide commodities that meet the environmental circumstances of specific operations.

e) The preparation of formal, full-scale EAs is not usually needed for WFP interventions as WFP generally assists small-scale asset creation activities. To ascertain that interventions are low-risk, WFP would initiate a review process at the earliest stage of programming cycles and give due attention to the management of identified risks.

f) The purchase, use and application of potentially hazardous chemicals be minimized to the extent possible, taking into consideration the need to prevent infestations or losses of stored food commodities. WFP would comply with relevant international guidelines on pesticides, including FAO's International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides (updated in 1991) and ensure that country offices have access to all relevant information. Chemicals classified as being extremely or highly hazardous by the World Health Organization (Classes IA and IB) should not be used unless no other alternative exists.

g) WFP would like to accelerate the implementation of this policy, particularly the normative aspects—for example, staff training. There are a number of areas where WFP could use additional financial support for such PSA-type activities. Selected donors have the facility to fund environmental related activities. WFP will seek to secure such funds to assist in mainstreaming environmental initiatives.

35. Following the endorsement of this policy paper by the Executive Board, operational guidelines for the planning and implementation of environmental activities would be prepared.

ANNEX

CHECKLIST OF MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Project activity	Project component	Major risks
High risk:		
Road construction	Design, construction and maintenance	Alteration/hindrance of surface and groundwater flow; soil erosion and landslides; effects on vegetation/biodiversity; open areas to uncontrolled development
Irrigation/water control	Water storage/distribution system design and maintenance	Soil salinization/water logging; increase in water-borne diseases; reservoir tation; siltation; collapse of poorly-built structures; effects on water flow
Use of hazardous chemicals	a) Pesticides used for crop protection and afforestation	a) Severe human health and ecological impacts; water pollution; increased pest resistance and resurgence
	b) Pesticides, fungicides, rodenticides used on stored commodities	b) Depletion of the ozone layer from methyl bromide; severe human health effects from improper handling/storage/use
Emergency feeding of refugees/IDPs	Provision of food	Potential deforestation linked to cooking fuel requirements; increased grazing/cropping on degraded lands; encroachment into protected areas
Medium risk:		
Soil and water conservation on structures	Construction/maintenance of terraces, check dams, earthen or stone bunds	High failure rates and/or poor maintenance leading to further soil erosion and landslides
Agricultural intensification/crop production	a) Provision of seeds or promotion of non-native crops	a) Potential undermining of local plant genetic variability; monocultures/introduced crops may favour pest/disease outbreaks
	b) Land use changes (e.g., conversion of forests to cropland)	b) Nutrient mining; soil erosion; increased pressure on remaining forest resources
Forestry	Planting and fencing	Sustainability of species selected; soil erosion; fencing may increase grazing pressure on nearby lands