



# Innovations at the World Food Programme

Personal Experiences of World Food Programme  
Alumni Innovators

Published by: **The World Food Programme Alumni Network**  
Joseph Kaifala, Editor

**WFP** *Alumni Network*

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Book and cover design, Joseph Kaifala  
Front cover image: School Feeding (Burundi), WFP/Hugh Rutherford

### **Dedication**

To those who devote their lives to humanitarian service with the World Food Programme; to the resilience, courage and determination of those in the places they serve; to the mothers and children who are recipients of their nutritious food, and to the 65 million displaced people around the world.



## Foreword



At the World Food Programme (WFP), innovation has been at our core from the very beginning. For decades, WFP's undeterred focus on reaching people in need has driven us to constantly look for new approaches to food assistance in even the most precarious environments.

This book tells that story. It shows in detail how, over the past four decades, creative minds at WFP have worked together on innovations in programmes, delivery systems, and even in back office processes to make WFP more efficient and effective. All of this to better serve those who need our help.

We are recognized around the world and within the United Nations as a trailblazer. But we will never just rest on our laurels. We will continue to look for new approaches and use new technologies to reach more people in need. Just in the past few years alone:

- We have tapped into new ways to assess needs and provide food assistance through mobile phone technology;
- Unmanned aerial vehicles have become commonplace in our operations;
- Our beneficiaries are taking advantage of digital cash-based transfer programmes allow people to buy what they need, when and where they need it
- And WFP is even experimenting with cutting edge technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence to improve our operations.

To nurture even more innovative thinking at WFP we created an in-house "Innovation Accelerator" in 2015. We based it on best practices from the world of startups, the corporate sector and leading social entrepreneurs. The Accelerator offers a risk-free environment to experiment with new approaches, access to State-of-the-Art innovation methodologies and external networks to take innovations from inspiration to implementation.

I want to thank and congratulate my predecessors and former colleagues, especially those who have shared their experiences in this book. Thank you for creating an organisation that I am privileged to lead today – one with a "can-do" attitude that has innovation as part of its DNA. I would also like to thank the Alumni Network for putting this publication together, which I hope everyone who works with or cares about what WFP does will read. It proves what I like to say: WFP is the best of the best.

Best wishes,

David Beasley,

Executive Director

## Preface

The World Food Programme (WFP) Alumni Network (AN) published the first volume in an Oral History series in 2017 on the personal experiences of Alumni in the Southern African Drought Emergencies from the 1960s to 2017. Twenty-two Alumni, including four Executive Directors and a Deputy Executive Director, contributed to the volume. The publication was released at an event during the Annual Session of the Executive Board and was shared with WFP management and leaders. Managers throughout the organisation, as well as members and observers of the Executive Board, appreciated the effort to share and preserve the experiences of WFP Alumni, and encouraged AN to continue with its Oral History series.

Accordingly, the Steering Committee surveyed AN members on the topic for the second volume in the series, proposing three themes. The theme “Innovations at WFP” received the highest number of votes for 2017-2018. Innovations were important, as WFP successes could not have been achieved without efforts in the development and maintenance of systems to backstop operations on the ground. Other proposed themes will be considered for future volumes.

This volume contains contributions from 18 Alumni on “Innovations at WFP.” We have tried to present the innovations in a rough chronological order, which provides a sense of the starting point for each innovation. Many of the later innovations became possible because of earlier ones.

We are thankful to four former Executive Directors – Jim Ingram, Catherine Bertini, Josette Sheeran and Ertharin Cousin – for taking time to share their perspectives of what innovations occurred at WFP during their period of service. While Executive Director Ertharin Cousin (2012-2017) did not mention it herself, we cannot forget her role in: (a) linking staff with the governing body by supporting annual presentations by elected staff representatives to the Executive Board and (b) strongly supporting the establishment of the Alumni Network and facilitating its observer status at Executive Board meetings. Also, we cannot forget the innovation of partnerships with the private sector, including the “Walk the World” campaign that the former Executive Director Jim Morris (2002-2007) introduced at WFP. We are thankful to the current WFP Executive Director, David Beasley, for continuing to support the Alumni Network, and providing a Foreword for this volume.

This volume could not have been possible without contributions from Alumni who cared to share their respective stories. I hope these experiences and perspectives will be of some use to succeeding management and staff of WFP. I would like to acknowledge the contributions of other members of the Editorial Panel—Angela Van Rynbach and Gretchen Bloom in the USA, Peggy Nelson and Mohamed Saleheen in Rome.

I would also like to thank our able editor, Joseph Kaifala, who undertook to edit this second volume as well as the first one because of the attraction he feels towards WFP as an important organisation committed to a goal worth his time.

Suresh R. Sharma

President, Steering Committee, WFP Alumni Network

## Introduction

When “innovation” is used in the media these days, most people do not think of humanitarian organisations such as the World Food Programme (WFP). Our thoughts are usually drawn to the app-producing, Silicon Valley tech communities. But long before we were excited by mobile phones and new apps, individual or group innovations (within or outside organisations) have been transforming the way we live our lives. In fact, one of the original definitions of “innovation” is “revolution,” a change in the order of things.

What “innovation” truly means is the establishment of a new idea or an improvement on an old one. The last part of this definition is important because nowadays talks of “innovation” focus only on the establishment of new ideas and not on improvements on old ones. In contrast, WFP has become one of the world’s leading humanitarian organisations because of its amenability to “innovation” both as the creation of new ideas and an improvement on old approaches—with a clear vision on the most cutting-edge approach to serving poor and hungry people around the world.

However, an organisation is only as innovative as its employees, and that requires the creation of a conducive work environment where workers can bring bold new approaches to their job. WFP has always, whether formally or informally, encouraged bold new ideas or improvements on the delivery of services. An organisation cannot obtain a reputation of being one of the greatest humanitarian organisations by remaining stagnant and old fashioned. As time passes, conditions change, and new crises occur, WFP has innovated to tackle new challenges - learning from previous experiences in order to provide efficient services.

It was this drive to create or make better that drove various WFP Executive Directors to pursue or support ideas that placed the organisation in a better stead for humanitarian services. James Ingram fought rigorously for the reconstitution of WFP from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), Catherine Bertini supported the creation of Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) and pursued gender equality through Commitments to Women, Josette Sheeran introduced Cash for Food, thereby promoting locally produced food, which beneficiaries can purchase using WFP cash/voucher, and Ertharin Cousin crowned it all by supporting the establishment of a WFP Innovations Lab for creating and improving ideas. Perhaps these innovations by WFP workers will never be listed on the Forbes citation of groundbreaking innovations, but to those caught in dire humanitarian circumstances, and who receive better services as a result of innovations at WFP, these innovators deserve the greatest honour—that of lifesavers.

In this volume are some of the innovations that have made WFP one of the world’s leading humanitarian organisations. Unfortunately, though, the world is still confronted by challenging humanitarian crises and millions of people need feeding. More innovations are needed to deal squarely with these humanitarian

crises. This is a challenge for the WFP employees who bear the baton of service to poor and hungry people around the world.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all WFP photographers, especially Rein Skullerud, who has been very helpful towards the publication of these volumes.

Joseph Kaifala

Editor

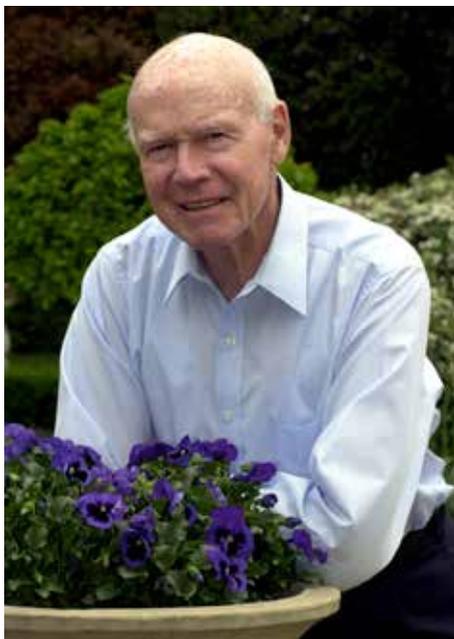
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**Pre 1992**

## A Vision for the World Food Programme as a Critical United Nations Organisation

**James Ingram**



My principal contribution was to reconstitute the World Food Programme's (WFP) relationship with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). This facilitated the introduction of many of the changes made by subsequent Executive Directors, notably Catherine Bertini. I have written a book, *Bread and Stones: Leadership and the Struggle to Reform the United Nations World Food Programme (2007)*, describing what it took to reconstitute WFP. I have no desire to revive my memories of that protracted, demanding experience. Let the story speak for itself.

A WFP Executive Director has three functions: to ensure that contributions are at least maintained and preferably increased; ensure overall appropriate and effective continuing management; and contribute to, and if necessary lead in, the development of new policy and consequential innovation. Ideally, the Executive Director should have a clear, consistent vision of ultimate goals to guide the changes he seeks. That I had a vision for the future of WFP as a critical player in the UN systems' development/humanitarian roles and the drive to sustain that vision in the face of many obstacles was my principal "innovation."

I believe that I helped bring about many specific changes within the limits of what was possible in that era. Chapter Three of my book, *Developing a Reform Agenda*, briefly alludes to some of the changes I wished to make. Another was the unification of field and headquarters staff, which is being covered by one of the contributors to this volume. I doubt that I could add to his account. Clearly, in seeking to turn WFP into a self-confident, centrally important, UN system "player," my aim was to make it able to respond better to the millions of disadvantaged and hungry people in developing countries. During most of my tenure, contributions to UN development agencies were largely static or even diminishing. I am proud that WFP was an exception. Contributions from donors continued to grow.

The shift of focus to humanitarian assistance got seriously underway and was strongly promoted by me, as described in John Shaw's book, *The World's*

*Largest Humanitarian Agency.* Indeed, I believe I was the one who conceived of that description and first used it in public addresses. More to the point perhaps was the improved funding for continuing refugee situations (Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations), and later through the introduction of an Immediate Response Fund, also described in *Bread and Stones*. It was clear to me that if WFP was to flourish, that is, continue to be seen as relevant to international aid priorities over the long run, the focus of its work needed to shift to emergency and protracted feeding. In this regard, our agreement with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was a necessary foundation.

The WFP I inherited was virtually unknown to the general public, unlike say the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or UNHCR, or dismissed by aid professionals as a donor driven, special interest, surplus food disposal agency ("Grocers," as some United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) professionals used to dismiss us). I believe I had some personal success in changing this perception among international organisations, in and outside the UN and in academia, beginning with the successful Hague Seminar that FAO did everything possible to prevent. I certainly worked hard at it. Within the UN, FAO did not allow WFP to participate in meetings of UN development agencies convened by the Director General of Development. The best way to deal with FAO bullying was to act decisively as I did, while keeping my actions within the spirit and letter of the WFP Basic Texts. I found that these Basic Texts were ignored by FAO or invariably interpreted in ways that preserved their overlordship. WFP policy papers were amended by FAO before submission to the Committee on Food Aid (CFA). I felt WFP sometimes acted like an abused dog, slinking off with its tail between its legs.

One of my earliest goals was to get a proper headquarters for WFP. We were not even listed in the Rome telephone directory as a distinct organisation. FAO's telephone number and street address were ours. From the outset, I established excellent relations with the Italians and encouraged them to provide us with an appropriate headquarters as they had done for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). To do so, it was necessary to get a separate Italy/WFP Headquarters Agreement, which I finally achieved near the end of my time. (Catherine Bertini, of course, reached agreement with Italy regarding the actual building). To be successful, institutions need to have pride in their identity. Staff members want to be part of a team and be recognized as such; hence, the importance of something as simple as a WFP logo. FAO opposed all of these initiatives.

To help maintain continuing donor confidence in our in-house capabilities to physically ship food efficiently and economically, I instituted an independent outside review. Equally, McKinsey & Co. was engaged to do an outside review of our administrative and personnel structure, which led to significant changes. Unfortunately, CFA did not agree to the consultant's recommendation that regional WFP offices be created, which, of course, FAO opposed. It was left to my successor to make this innovation happen.

Though my country, Australia, was a significant donor, it did not in fact have food surpluses for disposal like the USA and the then European Economic Community. Having spent a good part of my diplomatic career either serving in developing countries or overseeing Australia's development assistance, I became personally committed to the goals of WFP—it was not just a job but also a vocation.

Finally, I must stress that without the dedicated commitment of many of my WFP colleagues, none of this would have been possible. We are all just bricks in the edifice, some a bit more structurally important than others, but all play a part. I feel a great personal debt to those who, from the beginning of my tenure, 36 years ago, put their faith in me and encouraged me in the reforms I introduced to modernize WFP. It is really up to historians to judge my "innovations" and their worth, but I am proud of all that was achieved on my watch.

## Launching Income Generation for Vulnerable Women’s Group in Bangladesh

**Angela Van Rynbach**

Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) Programme in Bangladesh started in the mid 1970s as a relief programme for poor and vulnerable women. It constitutes a vital part of the national Public Food Distribution System (PFDS), expanded



during times of natural emergencies. Between 1986-1989, those supporting the VGF programme sought to start moving from “feeding” only to include “development,” and with that came a change of title to Vulnerable Group Development (VGD). This was the beginning of the transformation that over time incorporated an expanding focus on helping poor women out of poverty, which continues to this day.

The goal was to make a difference for extremely poor women by finding ways to help sustain them after their entitlement to food ended. The Government of Bangladesh, donors to VGD, a key NGO partner, BRAC (Building Resources Across Communities), and the World Food Programme (WFP) brought their resources

together to start to do so. We developed a homegrown pilot income generation scheme, tested it in the field, and then scaled up based on lessons learned.

During this period a major review of food assistance was taking place in Bangladesh called Strengthening Food-Assisted Development (SIFAD). A taskforce was set up under the chairmanship of the head of the Planning Commission with representatives of other government bodies, donors and WFP. The final report presented in 1989 supported the strengthening of VGD’s development focus, as well as dealing with other institutional issues. SIFAD provided a high level platform for discussing the future of the VGD programme as one component of PFDS.

The supply of 31.25 kg of wheat a month over a two-year cycle provided VGD beneficiaries with a “platform of consumption support.” Because the women were “ultra-poor,” they needed the monthly ration to help meet their family’s basic food needs, thereby giving them the possibility to take part in income generation training and skills development. The partners were faced with major challenges in identifying what activities would be economically viable and

feasible to implement on a large scale. The strategy was for VGD to provide groups of women with a package of development services to complement food assistance.

These were the early days of what later came to be called Gender in Development. Bangladesh was at the forefront of efforts to promote women's empowerment through access to income, credit, skills, better health and education, and thereby raising their status in society. Think of Grameen Bank and BRAC, among many others, who were undertaking pioneer work on micro-credit, income generation, formation of women's groups, and skills development. This was a stimulating time, full of innovative ideas and sharing of experiences. To this day, women in Bangladesh are seen "as the key to achieving sustainable food security and nutrition."<sup>1</sup>

How did we go about launching income generation support for VGD women? We had to bring partners together, design the scheme and secure the funding and staffing. Out of this setting of intense focus on finding solutions, we forged ahead, building on contacts, reviewing findings of the latest studies and evaluations, and further developing collaborations. We also had to strengthen staffing in the WFP Country Office, build up our monitoring and evaluation capacity, and advocate strongly for the need for change.

When I arrived in Bangladesh to take up my assignment as WFP Advisor in January 1986, I was excited to be given the opportunity and the challenge of heading the unit responsible for the VGD programme. I had worked at headquarters from 1981-1983, first, as a "Women in Development" advisor (although only for half time). I had been involved in the early stages of WFP's growing recognition of the importance of the role of women. Now I had the great privilege to work on one of the largest safety nets for women in the world.

The Bangladesh Country Office team working on VGD included VGD Programme Officers Rehana Banoo and Shahidul Haque, our training team with the late Younus Khan, Selina Nargis and Morshed, our Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Malcolm Duthie, and an increasing number of national officers monitoring and promoting the pilot income generation scheme, which included Mahjabeen Masood, Shamshunnahar Chowdhury, Syed Kabir Ahmed, Hafizur Rahman, and Hasan Hena. Over this period we recruited more women national officers. We benefited from having a country director, Mike Sackett, who fully supported strengthening the VGD programme and encouraged us to go ahead with our efforts. Everyone involved was highly motivated, committed, and open to change.

The Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation (DRR) administered the VGD programme, which the government also contributed to. With their agreement

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<sup>1</sup> S.R Osmani, Akhter Ahmed, Tahmeed Ahmed, Naomi Hossain, Saleemul Huq, Asif Shahan, "Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Bangladesh," An Independent Review Commissioned by the World Food Programme, Dhaka, September 2016.

and involvement, we were able to proceed with identifying partners to promote the initiative. The VGD Director at DRR was our main focal point and an integral member of the group working on the pilot scheme. The Upazila (sub-district) level authorities selected the beneficiaries and handled the food distribution, with some assigned local level technical staff.

BRAC came forward as a partner in the design and implementation of the income generation scheme, providing training, along with commitment of staff and financial resources. The support and inspiration of BRAC's founder and leader, Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, was crucial to the success of this initiative. The late Aminul Alam headed their team. He was full of enthusiasm, dedication, and never gave up.

All of us involved worked collaboratively, spending time in the villages, meeting VGD women, discussing their needs and hopes, finding out what might work and what might not, and what resources or staffing were needed. We really developed a strong sense of shared commitment. Without that spirit, I doubt we would have been able to move forward as we did. To say the least, it was an intense experience, but also an exciting one.

We began pilot testing the initiative in one Upazila, Manikganj, in 1987. We tried out four possible activities with 1,000 women and found that poultry rearing was the most viable. We visited Manikganj so often during that time that the Upazila Chairman started calling me "apa" or sister. Once we had selected poultry as our main focus, the partners came together at numerous workshops to take part in planning the activities, defining responsibilities, and discussing problems and constraints, and ways to overcome them. The Directorate of Livestock joined by providing technical training, supplying chicks through their hatcheries, and medicines. Later on, as the poultry scheme scaled up, BRAC took over the supply chain, as demand was so high for inputs.

Women in Bangladesh traditionally raised poultry around their homesteads, but poultry diseases were a serious problem as was access to improved varieties of chickens and lack of credit. These constraints had to be overcome if the poultry scheme was to be successful. This was done through concerted efforts to improve the supply chain, with inputs on marketing eggs, training of some VGD women as "poultry doctors," supplied with medicines and trained to treat diseases among the chickens, and the development of a model for chick rearing. One VGD woman in a village would raise day-old chicks supplied to her until they were old enough to be distributed to the "model rearers," who were given 25 chicks to raise. The women then sold eggs to their neighbors and earned some income. We added a credit component with support from BRAC and we were able to monetize some wheat from a donor.

There was strong emphasis on feedback through intensive monitoring and an openness to discuss how things were going. Our top leadership held us

accountable for results. At the end of the day, we hope we made a difference in the lives of the VGD women and their families.

What started with 1,000 women in one Upazila had expanded to 11 upazilas and about 30,000 women within a few years. From then on it expanded exponentially. Other activities were added: like goat and cow rearing, small trade and silkworm rearing. WFP organized periodic surveys of beneficiaries and found positive outcomes. In 2000, when I was Deputy Regional Director for the Asia Bureau, I accompanied a WFP Executive Board visit to Bangladesh. While visiting with VGD beneficiaries, I remember one delegate asking one of them about the benefits of the income generation scheme to her. She answered by pointing to her cow and the tin roof of her house.

There are many aspects of the VGD programme that have been improved over the years, changes that have already been made and others that will need to be made in the future. This effort, which started in 1987, introduced the process of improving VGD women's income earning capacity. This innovation was homegrown based on synergy among partners, scaled up based on field-testing, and brought together different streams of funding and expertise. The VGD programme continues and is being revitalized. WFP's Bangladesh Country Strategic Plan (2017-2020) includes "technical support to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to maximize the efficiency, effectiveness and governance of the VGD Programme while advocating for and supporting scale-up of the improved VGD model, which includes nutrition sensitive and promotional elements." We could only dream 30 years ago that VGD would continue and evolve as it has.

## The Unified Service

**Peter Lassig**

The “Unified Service” and other new practices were developed by the World Food Programme’s (WFP) “Human Resources” Unit. Human Resources (HR) is a term introduced in the early 1990s to replace “Personnel,” which had taken a pejorative smack. HR was adapted from “Financial Resources,” making it more disposable and exchangeable than “persons.”



The “Unified Service” concept developed at WFP over time. Its ancestor is the diplomatic service, whose members are rotated between duty stations following established rules and regulations. A similar system already existed in the United Nations family, notably at the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). The main difference to the diplomatic service is that the latter’s headquarters is the “home station,” which in UN terms can only be used for locally recruited personnel.

Unified Service staffers are considered internationally recruited even if employed in their home country. This occurs more frequently at headquarters duty stations.

When I joined WFP in 1991 as Deputy Director of Administration and Chief Personnel, I brought over 20 years of experience from UNHCR, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). My two-year secondment in 1996 to the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) as Director of Personnel provided another occasion to compare “staff morale.” My impression from WFP was and still is better reflected by the following words of Donna Ducharme, who worked in WFP Finance and FAO Emergencies and, after a study break to obtain a MPA at Harvard, is now a UN system consultant:

My wide experience with UN agencies through consulting assignments gives me a unique perspective on WFP. It is a community, a tight-knit group of people whose lives and experiences typically transcend the usual work experience in other organisations. Employees' paths crisscross the globe allowing staff to work with new colleagues and learn from different situations.

Opportunities - for those engaged and energetic - are abundant, contributing to the energy, vibrancy and sense of purpose with which staff work. People are envious of WFP staff. They envy the sense of belonging we seem to share, the training, the care given to wellbeing, the efficiency and effectiveness that allow us to work in a reasonable and productive manner. They wish for themselves the same opportunities, the camaraderie, the pride of working for such an admired organisation: cutting-edge, dynamic, purposeful, driven.

I maintain that this prevailing atmosphere has facilitated, if not triggered, the innovations and new practices described in this publication. One might add that it has also bred the WFP Alumni Network. A survey among serving staff would be worthwhile to ascertain to which extent this level of staff commitment still exists. Part B of this article includes the results of a survey sent to retired staff on their experience with the Unified Service.

Unfortunately, the "Unified Service" concept stopped short of the General Service staff. While the international recruitment of General Service staff was phased out and the Association of Non-local General Service staff and the separate Staff Association of General Service staff joined together to create a single union, Field General Service staff and National Officers continued to be governed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and were administratively transferred to WFP only in July 2015, except for payroll which is still handled by UNDP. Unfortunately, they are now not represented by any of the staff associations/unions of either UNDP or WFP. The proposal to create a single ladder scale of job grades similar to the USA Civil Service, thus eliminating the three categories (General Service, Professional and Director) never saw the light of day, and the trench between categories deepened. As will be seen, the Unified Service turned professional specialists gradually into generalists with distinct recruitment and promotion patterns, while the knock-on effect to the General Service staff (especially at headquarters) was, that they remained "specialists" with the traditional recruitment and promotion patterns.

## [A. Evolution of Human Resources Functions in General and of Employment Contracts for International Professional and Higher Category Staff in Particular](#)

### **Introduction**

This "historical" review is based on the recollection of a WFP staff member, who was employed in early 1970 and separated in the early years 2000 with service in various country offices as Programme Officer and at headquarters as Emergency, Administrative and HR Officer. Except for a HR policy document of October 1, 2003 on the Administrative Procedures for International Professional Staff and a policy document dated October 1, 2005 on rotation, no other official documents have been consulted.

## **Historical Background**

When WFP was created in the mid 1960s as a temporary UN Programme, it was physically and administratively housed within FAO. The UN Secretary General was the other “parent” of WFP. The FAO Staff Rules, Staff Regulations and Procedures (the FAO Personnel Manual) were applicable to WFP staff, who were in fact issued FAO contracts, limited to WFP related activities. WFP did not have its own HR section. FAO Personnel Officers reviewed and decided on all personnel (headquarters and country office) posts related requests from WFP managers and staff alike. A client-friendly approach had yet to be developed. Requests for clarification/advice were often responded to with: “Read the (FAO Personnel) Manual.”

The FAO Staff Rules and Staff Regulations made a clear distinction between staff appointed to established headquarters positions (regular budget) and those employed for FAO funded project activities in country offices. The appointment of the first group of staff was on “established” posts (authorized by the FAO Board) and following a specific vacancy announcement and selection process, which could take up to one year. “Permanent” appointments, later substituted by “Continuing” appointments (no end date) were also granted. “Project” staff were not assigned to “established” posts, being outside the regular FAO/headquarters budget. Usually these staff members were not selected following a vacancy announcement, but by headquarters based managers, granted fixed term contracts only (with an end date related to the funding of the project) and were not eligible for a continuing appointment, regardless the accumulated duration of the successive fixed term contracts. Headquarters staff could move to a country office for a specific duration with temporary promotion and return rights to their positions at headquarters. The reverse (from country office to headquarters) was not possible, unless a country office staff member was selected following a vacancy announcement from among other external candidates. An eventual higher personal grade could normally not be retained, but additional steps at a lower grade headquarter level post could be granted.

The same administrative distinction between headquarters and country office staff was applied to WFP. This led to (for WFP) “absurd” situations, when WFP staff having served for many years in country offices, could only transfer to a headquarters position at WFP if the requirement for a specific vacancy announcement was waived by the Director General of FAO upon recommendation from the WFP Executive Director. The reassignment to headquarters was limited to one year, extendable subject to additional authorization under the same procedures. The promotion of each WFP Headquarters based staff had to be authorized by the WFP “Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes” subject to the reclassification of the incumbent’s post to a higher level by the FAO post establishment authority.

This situation became untenable for WFP Senior Management when the Programme’s mandate gradually moved from “food for development” to “food for

emergencies” during the 1980s. Problems developed not only for the management of staff, but also for other aspects of WFP operations at headquarters and in country offices. For instance, emergency operations above a certain value had to be authorized by the FAO Director General upon the recommendation of the WFP Executive Director, delaying WFP’s actions with generally little value added.

### **The Establishment of a World Food Programme Human Resources Unit and Creation of the Unified Service**

With emergencies growing in number and size, WFP’s need for a flexible workforce became ever more pressing. The post and staff profiles at headquarters as well as in country offices became more generic, with the exception of a few really specialized functions at headquarters without a counterpart in country offices. In addition, it became essential for WFP to develop a system whereby an exchange of professional experience between headquarters and country offices (and later regional offices) could be ensured. Furthermore, the nature of emergency related activities demanded a flexible workforce, including a different type of appointment/contract, increased staff movement between country offices, between field and headquarters, and between functional responsibilities. A review of the post establishment process, a career development policy and reduction-in-force provisions specifically tailored to WFP’s mandate and operational requirements became pressing issues.

The concept for one Unified Service regardless of geographical location and functional responsibility was born. All staff would be issued the same type of appointment/employment contract. The challenge was how to introduce this concept to a system/structure, which was designed and developed over the years by and for an entity (FAO) with another mandate and different needs. Granting WFP full autonomy in line with the legal status of other similar existing UN Programmes, with its own Rules, Regulations and Procedures, was however not yet “in the cards.”

During the second half of the 1980s an agreement was reached between the WFP Senior Management, the WFP Executive Board, the FAO Director General and the UN Secretary General to grant WFP more autonomy. This was achieved by taking more decision-making authority from the UN Secretary General and the FAO Director General and delegating it to the WFP Executive Director on many aspects of the WFP’s activities.

Concerning posts and staffing matters, WFP was authorized to create its own HR Unit with the FAO Staff Rules, Regulations and Procedures remaining in force. In order to ensure that WFP adhered to the FAO Personnel Manual, an FAO Personnel Officer was “seconded” to WFP. In addition, several FAO General Service staff with extensive HR experience were “transferred” to WFP as well.

WFP Senior Management authorized the Unified Service contract with the intention to create one body of WFP staff without distinction between

headquarters and country offices. This ran into difficulties because Unified Service staff at headquarters had the right to be converted to continuing appointments, while Unified Service at country level had no such right and remained on fixed term (time bound) appointments. Management tried to resolve this dilemma by extending the continuing appointments to Unified Service staff in country offices.

This decision created a growing number of staff with continuing appointments, funded by a two-year budget of voluntary pledges and contributions with a limited financial portion to cover administrative costs, including staff cost. From inception WFP was expected to do more with less. A growing body of continuing appointments would make an eventual downsizing of staff very expensive (separation monies) as compared to fixed term appointments with an expiry date. An alternative contract had to be identified to protect the interest of WFP.

### **Core and Non-Core Project Appointments**

The establishment of a HR unit within WFP and the increased delegation of authority to the Executive Director did not fundamentally alter the nature of employment contracts. The so-called "Specialist" staff remained at headquarters, with separate contractual conditions. For instance, a "Specialist" staff was not required to be mobile, and in the event of a reduction-in-force, a "Specialist" staff would have had priority for retention over a Unified Service staff.

To limit the growing number of Unified Service contract holders with continuing appointments, WFP created Core and Non-Core project contracts. The criteria for distinguishing between Core and Non-core contracts were very general. Senior Management had set an overall limit to the number of continuing contract holders worldwide, which it considered "safe" to limit its potential financial liabilities within a two-year administrative budget cycle. Continuing contract holders included all "Specialists" at headquarters and Unified Service at headquarters and country offices. The number of Core contracts with continuing appointment was therefore very restricted. Only those functions that Senior Management considered essential for WFP were defined as Core project. The essential nature of functions fluctuated with the ever-changing nature and size of emergency operations. Non-Core project contracts were those considered non-essential.

Core contracts had no end date (continuing). Non-Core contracts had an end date and could not exceed four consecutive years, considering an International Labour Organisation (ILO) Tribunal ruling. According to this ruling all UN staff employed for a period of five consecutive years and longer with satisfactory service had an "expectation for contract renewal," unless no other suitable position was available. Five years of contributions to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) was also the trigger point for vesting a pension entitlement. Within WFP, with its majority of generic posts worldwide, alternative positions could in most cases be identified. In addition, when the first Non-Core

contracts approached the four-year limit, managers appealed to the Executive Director to grant waivers for extensions exceeding five years for operational reasons. This resulted in the de-facto conversion of Non-Core to Core contracts (continuing). It became evident that another approach was necessary.

### **The “Indefinite Appointment”**

The creation of a “Unified Service” granting all WFP International Professional staff at headquarters and in country offices the same type of contract remained elusive. An attempt to do so with Core and Non-Core contracts was not successful either.

The solution was found through a modification of the FAO Staff Rules, Regulations and Procedures by adding “Special Rules and Regulations for Indefinite Appointments applicable to WFP only.” This required approval by the FAO Executive Board first. The creation of the related procedures was delegated to the Executive Director.

The Indefinite Appointment (IA) does not carry a specific expiry date, but may be terminated for reasons specified in the Special Rules relating to IA, including “in the interest of the good administration of the Programme, whether or not such action is contested by the staff member.” In addition, the “Reduction-in-Force Policy and Procedures” was modified to meet the specific needs of WFP.

IA came into force on January 1, 2001 for all International Professional Staff (P-1 to D-1) regardless of their geographical location, with revised policies and procedures concerning selection, appointment, reassignment, probationary period and performance appraisal, and promotion and reduction-in-force. It was intended to ensure more equity among staff performing the same or similar functions in the same working and living environment, and to introduce more transparent and simplified policies and processes.

The Unified Service, Core and Non-Core staff were absorbed into an IA type subject to a corporate review process. The contracts of staff not meeting the IA essential qualifications were not extended. Existing Specialist staff at headquarter were under no obligation to accept IA, but their career prospects became limited. No new Specialist appointments were issued as of 1998. The “Specialists” at headquarters were gradually being phased out by a recruitment stop, voluntary conversion to IA or voluntary separation/transfer to another UN organisation. This contract consolidation was not only a time and money saver; it also strengthened the esprit de corps of the international professional WFP staff.

Other types of appointments/contracts remained in existence with incumbents not eligible for conversion to IA:

- Fixed term with an end date not to exceed four years, such as D-2s and above, JPOs, staff financed by trust funds and staff on secondment.

- Short term (less than 12 months duration).
- Consultancy contract holders.

These contract holders could apply for a Roster position, from which a selection for an IA had to be made.

### **Reassignment of Staff**

WFP's mandate called for the presence of its staff in various geographical locations and in diverse functions worldwide, often on a short notice and always for a defined duration of assignment, which varied per operational requirements. Mobility was therefore an essential part of the WFP's mandate and of the management of its staff.

Difficult living and working conditions in a number of duty stations required an outward rotation of staff, at frequent intervals, to be replaced by other staff, if so required. In addition rotation exposed staff to various professional environments/experiences with often higher responsibilities, enhancing career development. Furthermore, it responded to staff members' personal and/or family needs, meeting work/life balance requirements.

As early as the second half of the 1960's WFP had established its country offices and introduced a "limited" rotation system for country based staff only. This did not require an authorization or delegation from the Director General of FAO. It was considered a pure WFP operational requirement and was within the provisions of the FAO Personnel Manual. A headquarters post was created for an Administrative Officer assigned to the Office of the Director of Operations. The functions of this position were limited to the selection (the appointment and preparation of contracts was handled by FAO), the reassignment and promotion of the country based staff. Recommendations were made by/through the Director of Operations to the Executive Director for approval. All country related activities were under the authority of the Director of Operations.

In order to create, abolish and grade the positions at country offices, a "workload and staffing" review was held every two year in line with budget periods, which followed the duration of pledges and donor contributions. Recommendations for the establishment, grading, movement and abolishment of country posts were also made by/through the Director of Operations to the Executive Director for approval once the budgetary coverage was secured.

Over the years, the management of country posts and country staff became more structured with the establishment of a Reassignment Committee. The secretary to this committee was the Administrative Officer attached to the Office of the Director of Operations. This post and responsibilities were consolidated within the headquarters unit when established in the second half of the 1980s. The Director of Operations remained the chairman (it was always a man) of the committee.

WFP continued to refine its policy and procedures on reassignment, rotation and mobility of its staff in the International Professional and Higher Categories to include all functional groups at headquarters, regional, liaison and country offices. Movement of staff on a regular basis was not only geographical but also functional/professional. Mobility became an integral part of the contractual employment conditions of all staff. Temporary waivers for mobility could be granted by the Executive Director.

In this respect, WFP was well in advance of the UN "Programme for Reform" promulgated by the UN Secretary General in 1997, which considered mobility, both professional and functional, as a key element of reform.

The normal assignment cycles, which followed the UN/International Civil Service Commission's (ICSC) classification of duty stations, were based on assessment of "hardship," i.e., level of living and working conditions, including if the duty station is considered family or non-family. The ICSC hardship classification and corresponding WFP assignment cycle has essentially remained unchanged, the assignment duration ranging from two to four years.

These assignment cycles were indicators only and could not always be applied rigidly. For operational and/or personal/family reasons, the cycles could be shortened or extended. In addition, the ICSC classification did not always reflect the real situation as experienced by WFP staff in a given country, and WFP could adjust its reassignment cycle accordingly. Longer assignments than indicated may also apply because of the nature and/or limited number of posts/functions in a given ICSC category.

### **Special Operations Approach with Incentives for Assignment to Difficult and Very Difficult Duty Stations**

By 1990/1991, with the outbreak of civil war in Somalia, it became evident that the provisions of the UN/ICSC for the service of UN staff in such duty stations were inadequate, both for WFP staff and their eventual families.

As a result, WFP/HR developed an additional system of incentives for staff serving in difficult, very difficult, and non-family duty stations. The classification of duty stations was determined by the UN/ICSC and the UN Department for Safety and Security. The incentives, in addition to the normal UN/ICSC entitlements, included mission status with payment of reduced daily subsistence allowances, rest and recuperation travel at regular intervals, extra paid holidays, extra family visit travels, etc. Sister UN agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF had similar provisions for their staff in those duty stations. WFP duty stations with no presence of other UN agencies/programmes, which were considered difficult/very difficult, were included by WFP under this incentive programme as "as if non-family duty stations."

This worked well for WFP, but it was outside the provisions of the UN/ICSC, which were not developed for staff working in emergency environments. At the

beginning of the years 2000, the UN/ICSC established its own extra incentives/provisions, and WFP was required to fall in line and abolish its own incentive measures.

### **Promotion of Staff**

Together with the reassignment of country based staff that commenced in the second half of the 1960s, country staff was considered for promotion. This was initially not applied in a systematic manner, but was the result of an ad-hoc recommendation by managers through the Director of Operations to the Executive Director, provided that the funds were available for a higher grade post in the country office.

By the end of the 1970s and early 1980s, a Promotion Committee chaired by the Director of Operations was set up to streamline the promotion review of country based staff, and to make it more transparent. Over the following years, after the creation of the HR Unit within WFP and the establishment of the Unified Service, the composition of this committee and its Terms of Reference were frequently modified. In addition, the process of the promotion review, the eligibility and criteria for promotion were drawn up and managers/staff were informed.

By the time IA was introduced, all procedures related to the promotion review for IA holders at headquarters, regional offices and country offices were consolidated. Major elements of this review were the following:

- Promotion review was held on a yearly basis for promotion from P1 to P5
- Promotion was not linked to the level of the post
- The number of promotions was limited and determined by the number and level of all budgeted posts worldwide; i.e., the number of P3 staff could not be more than the number of P3 posts budgeted. In addition, some promotion slots had to be reserved for outside recruitment
- All serving staff with a minimum of years in service at a given level, whether recommended or not by their managers, were reviewed by the Promotion Committee based on their professional profile and performance evaluation reports over preceding years
- The recommendations by the Promotion Committee in order of priority and within the available slots were made to the Executive Director, who could accept, reject or add promotions
- The basic criteria for promotion were merit and mobility. Merit covered many aspects such as leadership qualities and potential, management capabilities and supervisory skills, job knowledge, competence and comparative merit, communication skills and personal and inter-personal effectiveness. Regarding mobility, a combination of both geographical and professional mobility was highly desirable

I remember sessions of the promotion and reassignment committees chaired by the then Director of Operations, Robert (Bob) Chase in Building "F," who was smoking a big cigar and all windows open – no way to make any observations in

this regard. The regional branch chiefs came in and out to defend their proposals, and HR representatives made remarks and took notes.

### **Rosters for Selection and Appointment**

Shortly before the creation of IA, WFP introduced generic job profiles for various functional job families rather than working with individual job descriptions to be reviewed and authorized by the Establishment Unit of HR. Various functional rosters were established and on a regular basis updated following generic vacancy announcements or through open applications. Placement on the roster was selective and done through a corporate process plus authorization by the Executive Director.

If managers had the budget, they could select a generic profile and proceed with the selection of a candidate for appointment from the pre-authorized rosters. This further streamlined the appointment process. As a result the Establishment Unit was abolished.

### **B. Personal Experiences with the “Unified Service”**

In the introductory part of this paper, one colleague was quoted giving an enthusiastic statement about the Unified Service at WFP. Since life is not only sunshine, a survey has been carried out among former WFP staff on the distribution list of the Alumni Network. With the assistance of Tom Shortley and Arianna Cepparotti, 10 questions were asked using “Survey Monkey.” There were 46 responses, of which 27 were from fee paying members of the Alumni Network. Of all 46 responses, 62 percent were from former Unified Service staff, 25 percent from former Professional “Specialists” and 13 percent from former General Service staff.

Respondents formerly belonging to the Unified Service had been subject to an average of four reassignments, of which one did not correspond to their own choice, and two were at hardship stations. The acceptance of geographical and/or professional (functional) reassignments was considered helpful for their career by 65 percent. However, one-third had been forced into taking up an assignment that did not correspond to their choice, and 38 percent found that reassignments have negatively affected their family life. An overwhelming 80 percent thought that the Unified Service concept had positively contributed to the development of WFP and strengthened team spirit among its staff.

Twenty-three percent of respondents said that during their service, a staff survey had been conducted on their professional and/or personal experience with the Unified Service. These respondents were contacted to obtain more detailed information about the time and nature of this survey. However, no replies were received except from one colleague who did not remember when, in what form, and who conducted the survey. He was also not informed of the outcome.

Respondents reported very few events that were caused by the application of Unified Service rules and regulations. One respondent felt that the reassignment of Specialists in Shipping has seriously decreased the quality of Shipping, in particular chartering activity. Another respondent said that his reassignment to headquarters (without being asked) had later furthered his career in country offices. One colleague who wasn't so lucky reported that four out of five transfers during his 22 years of service with WFP were not based on any of the three choices one could list for the next duty station but "in the best interest of WFP."

Another colleague even indicated that out of seven geographical reassignments, none corresponded to his own choice, and five were in hardship stations. He stated that the reassignments did not help his career, that he was forced into taking them up, and they negatively affected his family life. This notwithstanding, he stated that the Unified Service concept has positively contributed to the development of WFP and strengthened team spirit among its staff. One is tempted to say: *per aspera ad astra!* (Through difficulties to the stars!)

The general comments were by and large the most revealing. One respondent said that the Unified Service concept requires the issuance of long-term (career) contracts, and WFP is doing itself a disservice by more recently issuing, increasingly, short-term or consultant contracts. This would reduce the sense of loyalty, commitment and hard work. Also in favour of career contracts, another respondent mentioned that the move from two-year fixed term contracts for field assignments to continuing contracts when first introducing the Unified Service allowed him to obtain a mortgage to buy a house under his national law. One respondent felt that the mobility concept did not sufficiently take into consideration personal situations such as marriage, children, and spouse employment. One colleague highlighted that the Unified Service rules did away with the difference in contractual conditions between headquarters and field staff, made the interchange of these staff flexible and gave the Executive Director the much needed full responsibility for staff management. Previously, the transfer of a field staff member to headquarters without vacancy announcement required approval by the Director General of FAO. Another colleague cautioned that the Unified Service will only succeed if people are selected based on professional qualifications and skill-based merits (implying that this is not always the case).

One person complained that while stays at headquarters were occasionally allowed beyond the statutory term, this was not the case for assignments in a field duty station. Another person regretted that no explanation was ever given pertaining to why he/she was not retained for one or the other post. A good aspect of the Unified Service was reported to be the many excellent opportunities it offered for professional training courses, which had a positive impact on career development and teamwork with other colleagues. One former

General Service staff member observed that during his 25 years of service, there were very negligible opportunities for General Service staff (i.e., as compared with professionals in the Unified Service). A revealing observation was that while the Unified Service was introduced to get headquarters staff to the field and field staff to headquarters, which at the time could only be done against resistance (even headquarters assignments were not necessarily considered attractive) due to security considerations, staff inclinations have somehow changed.

### **Conclusion**

From my experience with the WFP Personnel System, the introduction of the Unified Service and IA concepts were effective means to attract and retain committed staff for a "field" oriented organisation operating increasingly in difficult and sometimes dangerous places, growing rapidly but on an uncertain funding basis. Both ideas have helped create and maintain a solid body of homogeneous and committed staff.

Personnel managers not only at WFP have to fight an uphill battle with their colleagues from Budget to offer a reasonable amount of job security through long-term employment based on short-term funding. The UN system is not immune to a worldwide trend of moving away from "permanent" and "continuing" appointments. But good candidates interested in reasonably stable careers take a dim view of time-limited offers, even if the pay is competitive, in particular if combined with expatriate status. Those who accept will hardly develop an allegiance to the employer and will from day one spend time and energy searching for other job opportunities. The increasing use of consultants may be expedient, but at the end of the day, more costly, ineffective, and detrimental to general staff morale.

**1992-2002**

## From “Truck Drivers” to a Preeminent Humanitarian Organisation

**Catherine Bertini**



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Everything we did at the World Food Programme (WFP) from 1992-2002 is predicated on what former Executive Director Jim Ingram achieved during his tenure. The fact that he was able to essentially divorce WFP from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) made most of our innovations possible. As of January 1, 1992 (I arrived on April 5, 1992), we could organize and manage WFP without needing clearance from FAO. There were a few exceptions (i.e., the UN Secretary General and the Director General of FAO appoint the WFP Executive Director and approve the ED’s ASG nominations; FAO maintained approval rights of emergency projects over a certain level), but apart from these, decisions on the day-to-day management of the organisation was completely different than it had been earlier, and in the end totally ours. Even the WFP Board, our governing body, was reformed and streamlined to be more focused on providing a broad direction.

At the same time, geopolitically, the Soviet Union had collapsed in December of 1991; the Berlin wall had come down earlier. There were more humanitarian emergencies in the world, especially as Eastern Europe broke up, and a greater need to act very quickly in multiple locations. We were also dealing with other periodic crises, most notably a drought in Southern Africa and severe hunger in

Somalia. Now we had the mandate and the opportunity to reshape our work. We had to build a WFP of the future. Many changes in that decade (1992-2002) were predicated on our freedom of decision-making. We made significant changes in Human Resources and in our financial management system. There were many new technical developments and improvements. We created a mission statement (which Gretchen Bloom has written about) that resulted, among other things, in focusing on women as beneficiaries and WFP staff members. We shifted our concentration, our mission, to individuals. How can we end hunger? How can we most efficiently and effectively reach hungry, poor people?

One of the first important innovations was the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) system, which was started with a USD 1.1 million grant from USAID. We were fortunate that a young officer, Pablo Recalde, provided intellectual leadership to develop that system. After VAM was launched, a minister of a certain country met with me to request more food aid for a certain region of his country. I agreed that his country could use additional assistance, but in a different region. It turned out that the region for which he was requesting aid was his own region, and that area was significantly better off than other regions of his country. We were able to show, with data - his own government data - the areas of great need, and he rescinded his original request. The bottom line is that we were able to target (I understand that WFP now has the capacity to target using drones and watching where people are moving), and thus dramatically improve our effectiveness.

One time we sent some experts to Panama at their request to train Panamanian officials to create a national VAM type system, so they could identify areas of food vulnerability. Frankly, I thought that was a growth area, one in which WFP could lend its expertise in countries that were either graduating from food aid or just needing some extra help to set up sustainable systems of their own.

There was a group of people at headquarters at the time who were creative, advanced technical experts. In retrospect, they were like early Silicone Valley outside the box thinkers. They were creating various expansive ways to communicate and share data. We had inherited old, cumbersome systems. I was amazed and impressed by the initiatives and ideas that were coming out of this group of technical communications people. One of their new systems became what we called Deep Field Mailing System (DFMS), where one could be in a remote office in North Korea, for example, and easily connect to Rome. Later they developed the Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications system (FITTEST). This was all cutting-edge, and it helped build WFP's lead capacity in communications. When the UN returned to Afghanistan after the British and American bombings in the fall of 2001, WFP was the first agency whose international staff re-entered, and we erected a cell tower for the use of the entire system. WFP communications evolved from a bunch of brilliant technicians at headquarters to a worldwide WFP system, and WFP becoming the

communications network expert within the UN system. Here's to those fabulous techies!

We were always, of course, good at logistics. Communications was a new version of logistics. But primarily, we always had to be able to move food as quickly as possible. Other agencies, where possible, would piggyback on our transport system to move humanitarian assistance. Many people contributed to this legacy, but Tun Myat deserves the lion's share of the credit for having the vision, clarity and sense of purpose to build WFP's premier transport capacity.

WFP instituted air transport services in regions where there was no commercial service but many humanitarian needs—a function that eventually became the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). We had a tragedy in Kosovo, when the WFP plane crashed into a mountain and there were no survivors. There was an in-depth review, and many entities were held responsible. The crisis caused WFP to improve and strengthen its capacity. Shortly thereafter, when lives were lost in an OCHA/UNCP chartered helicopter that was overloaded during a Mongolia mission, the UN decided that any entity wishing to charter an aircraft was to do so either through WFP or UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, by this time the two UN centres of excellence in this field.



Kosovo, WFP/Tom Haskell

In the early 1990s, WFP country leadership did not have job titles conducive to their work, and they were considered assistants to the UNDP Resident Coordinator and titled "Director of Operations." They didn't have direct access to officials at appropriate levels in government ministries. However, WFP always had excellent transport systems. As a result, we were sometimes simply referred

to as "Truck Drivers." Once we changed the titles and the access of the lead WFP person in each country, our country offices were able to have much more impact in support of hungry people.

WFP is of course voluntarily funded, primarily by government donors. In the early 1990s, there was a fair amount of strain among donors about how much they were paying and for what. A minority of donors was giving cash only. The largest donors, USA and others were donating in-kind food. Some, especially the USA were not giving much cash. European donors started moving away from individual products (like Danish cheese, Norwegian fish, German beef) and more towards cash for WFP to buy food in bulk in developing countries. Those donors and others believed that it was not fair that some of their cash donations were being used to pay overhead for American in-kind food. The USA position was, "We send food - the others can send cash." There were also issues pertaining to overhead costs and needs of the programme. Working with donors, a full cost recovery system was created. As a result, if a donor sent food, the donor also had to send enough cash to manage the programme. Moreover, our activities had a fixed percentage of overhead costs. In reality, we set up a new financial system for donors. It strengthened our efficiency and helped develop more confidence among donors.

We also created a more systematic organisational structure to interact with donors through the creation of regional bureaux. The concept was like that of the operations' regional bureaux. For example, we had a bureau for Europe, and an expert for Sweden, Germany, etc. so that we could better understand each donor and their needs and interests.

Our financial management system was totally redesigned. This began in 1992 when I asked the external auditor to do a report on our field financial system, in addition to their regular audit. The British external auditor looked at me and said, "Well, we could do that, but you won't like the result." And I replied, "that's precisely why I am asking you to do it. How are we expected to fix anything if we don't know what the weaknesses are?" So they did their review. Predictably, it was damning. I also commissioned a compatible review from another consulting firm that had done earlier work for WFP, about another aspect of our financial system.

Now we had two very negative reports, but the Board didn't commission them; management did. So, before we presented them to the Board, we had a strategy session to plan what needed to be done. We recruited Tony Mornement, from the field; he had been a Brigadier General in the British Military and was a WFP Country Director. Under his leadership, we devised a system of Quick-Wins and Long-term objectives. We wanted to first tackle a variety of items that could be easily changed or fixed to start a momentum and keep it going until we had the time and resources to establish an entirely new financial management system for the long-term. We presented both our short-term and long-term plans to the

Board and they were dumbfounded. I remember the German Representative saying, "it is incredible that all these negative things are happening." (This is why I always tell my students that the problems you find in the beginning of a new job are old problems. Find them and fix them soon. If you wait too long, they become your problems). In this case, we initiated an organisation-wide project: The Financial Management Improvement Project (FMIP), which culminated in the creation of an entirely new computerized system not only for finances, but also for human resources, contributions of cash and in-kind, etc. Our long-term goal was to delegate as much as possible to the field, so it was essential that staff at each organisational level and location had access to the same information on budget, expenditures, authorizations, funds raised, so that delegation could work effectively and responsibly.

We budgeted USD 40-44 million to create this system. Jessie Mabutwas was the lead. She was the auditor, later Finance Director, and, once the Board created a third assistant secretary general position, she was Assistant Executive Director for Administration. The first Finance Director working on this project was Gary Eidet. In a competitive process, we chose SAP, the German software company to help create the system. Initially, we called the project SAP, but we decided to create our own name to own our system. We held a contest at WFP to name the new system and offered a prize for the winning name. That is how the system became the WFP Information Network and Global Systems (WINGS).

Other chapters in this volume have covered Human Resources and some of its complex issues, so just a couple of notes here. For recruitment, we tried to build a system that was fair and transparent in relation to the field and headquarters, which became a global roster function. That way, there was a quality review of those placed on the roster, with delegation to hiring managers. We advertised for people to apply to the roster and we hired consultants to recruit potential candidates from underrepresented groups, especially women from the South.

One other issue with hiring was how to create a contract that could be changed if there was a large budget shortfall. We tried to create a new contractual category. We announced this to the staff with a huge fanfare, and then our lawyers told us it was essentially the same as our old contract, so it didn't accomplish our objective. I was disappointed, to say the least, and embarrassed. I thought we had finally found a solution, but unfortunately, we hadn't properly vetted this idea. Today, however, the temporary option is worse, as hundreds if not thousands of staff are hired on consultancy contracts, which offer no permanence, slim benefits, in a seldom transparent process.

On the issue of women at WFP, I am proud that we reached 39 percent female international professional staff in 2002—up from 17 percent 10 years earlier. There was also movement at the country office level. This is discussed more deeply in Gretchen Bloom's chapter.

Personal security for staff was getting worse in the 1990s. The first targets were our truck drivers and national officers working in the field. As many regions and countries became more and more unsafe, international staff also became targets. Sadako Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), and I used to raise the security issue in every meeting of the UN Secretary General's Senior Management, but other agency heads did not make this a priority until the tragic bombing of the UN office in Baghdad in August 2003. Since no one else was listening or strengthening security, each of the three agencies expanded its own staff security capacity.

At one point, WFP had about USD 3 million extra from some project and the donor didn't want the money back, so we used it for staff security training. We hired a few consultants and trained many of our own staff. The objective was to train every staff member globally in his or her own language. It was a two or three-day training, depending on whether the staff member was in an office or field. We also hired counsellors to support staff. We created anti-harassment guidelines and penalties. We established an ombudsman so that staff could file their complaints if they didn't want to go vertically through the system. We also created the office of Inspector General as an independent entity to investigate various concerns within the organisation. These efforts were some of our extremely successful and important actions at the time, because it was all about supporting staff.

Organisationally, we made a chart that looked upside down from a normal organisational system, because it had the field on the top and it narrowed down to headquarters and Executive Staff. Our objective was to put the field at the centre of our work. The aim of everything I have described was to empower the WFP people who were closest to beneficiaries. We did not want headquarters directing everything. Our focus was to get the right food to the right people at the right time. We thought about everything we did from the lens of beneficiaries. This meant more fortified food, feedback about what communities needed, listening more, supplying healthier food with less competition with the local market, reaching the cooks (usually senior women in households), and developing more options to purchase food locally. By the time I left, WFP was already the largest food purchaser in Africa, for instance.

These are a few of the initiatives we began during my decade at WFP. There were many more, some of which are written about in this volume. All that we achieved was accomplished by thousands of people within WFP. We tried to encourage creativity, innovation and teamwork throughout the organisation. At the executive level, we had a respected team that worked well together; our senior leadership team was fully in sync. For much of the time, this included Namanga Ngongi and Jean Jacques Graisse, and later Jessie Mabutias and Mohamed Zejjari. Teamwork can change the world!

WFP's reputation as "truck drivers" and its effective creative transport and logistics system was the base upon which the organisation built to become a preeminent humanitarian organisation and to help tens of millions of people to stay alive and thrive.

Since I left WFP and to this day, when I attend almost any UN or humanitarian meeting, someone inevitably mentions a cutting-edge programme that WFP is leading. It always makes me proud.

## Being an Effective Humanitarian Agency: Reduction in Financial Lead Time by Over Eight Months

Suresh Sharma



### Background

When I joined the World Food Programme (WFP) as a Budget Analyst in 1989, James Ingram was the Executive Director. This was his eighth year at the helm of the agency. I was told that he spent most of his time trying to reconstitute WFP as an autonomous organisation. As he got closer to achieving his goal of WFP autonomy, he must have turned his attention to making WFP financially autonomous as well.

When I met senior people in the organisation, I was surprised at the level of expectations for my position. Everybody seemed to know me (I had delayed my start date by six months in order to finish my doctorate). In fact, when I went

to meet the late John Shaw, he said, "Oh, Mr. Sharma, you are the person to fix our cash problem." I had no clue what he was talking about. I realized later that one of my jobs was "cash forecasting." That is, monitoring and forecasting the cash situation.

I was a junior officer in the Budget Office, but my title was "Special Assistant to the Chief of Budget." True to the spirit of the then Chief of Budget, Simon Eder, I started getting involved in all things in the Budget Office. A new director, Desmond Saldanha, joined in early 1990 as Director of Management Service Division, which included the Budget Branch. As part of my cash forecasting function, I started analyzing cash contributions made by major donors. Somehow that analysis reached Ingram. I was told he used it in his visits to the US and Canada to persuade donors to increase their cash contributions.

WFP acquired its autonomy in January 1992, a few months before the end of Ingram's tenure. In one of the meetings of the governing body at the time, the Committee for Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA), he said something to the effect that "this Executive Director would not leave the organisation with less than one hundred million cash" in its account.

That statement stuck with me. I began to see how Ingram had started focusing on the financial position of the organisation as his mission to streamline its governance aspect seemed to be reaching a logical conclusion. I am going to describe my understanding of the situation and the innovative nature of WFP financial arrangement.

### **WFP Financial Arrangement**

WFP was established as a voluntarily funded agency. A target of pledge level was set for each biennium. The regulations required that one-third of the pledge in aggregate be paid in cash and up to two-thirds could be made as in-kind (commodities) contributions. The CFA had also decided that up to USD 45 million of such a general pledge could be utilized for emergencies.

There were two problems with this arrangement: firstly, the cash cost was capped at one-third of the total cost, and secondly, there was no systematic way to reach an “aggregate” level of one-third cash unless everybody paid one-third. How this dilemma was resolved with the adoption of the 1995 Resources and Long-term Financing Policies (RLTF) can be a topic for another innovation story, but I will dwell on the innovation of “early financing.”

In those days, a commitment had to be made (same for all UN agencies) before an order for the purchase of goods and services was made. While the General Regulations said something like “the approval of the project is the authorization,” there had to be income, especially for the operations, to make a commitment. (Administrative expenditures could be committed once the Programme Support Administrative Budget was approved by the CFA, in anticipation of the receipt of one-third cash). Member states would make pledges at the Pledging Conference, or on an ad hoc basis, especially for emergencies, through a facility called the International Emergency Reserve Fund (IEFR). The actual remittance of funds from those pledges would be made much later. The length of delay was different from donor to donor—some paid at the beginning of the financial year, some upon calling forward, some upon incurring actual expenditure, and others at the end of their financial period. While the organisation was managing its operations for long-term development activities, the financing for emergency operations, either as a part of IEFR activity or through the utilization of the above-mentioned USD 45 million from regular resources was problematic.

From that time on, WFP embarked on an innovative path to reduce financial lead time to reach beneficiaries earlier through various financial initiatives, which are shown on the table below.

### Initiative for Providing Assistance to Beneficiaries Earlier

Year	Instrument	Action	Lead Time Reduction
1991	Immediate Response Account (IRA)	Funding for Emergencies	
1995	Operational Reserve (OR) under Resources and Long-term Financing (RLTF)	Advance Against <b>Confirmed</b> Contributions	2 months
1999	DSC Advance Facility (DSCAF)	Advance for Support Services	
2004	Working Capital Financing Facility (WCFF)	Advance Against <b>Forecast</b> Contributions	4 months
2008	Forward Purchase Facility (FPF)	Pre-purchase of Food	2 months
2010	Increase the size of WCFF and Integration of OR and DSC	For Support Services	
2014	Global Commodity Management Facility Working Capital Financing Facility Corporate Services Financing Facility	Pre-purchase of Food Advance for Programmes Advance for Support Services	
2016	Integrated Road Map (IRM)	Advance for Country Programme Budget	

### **Advance Financing for Emergencies (1991)**

In 1991, Ingram made a proposal to the governing body to create an Immediate Response Account (IRA) in order to have operating capital to address emergency needs (CFA: 32/p/5). IRA would provide a source of funds for making commitments and incurring expenditures even before an actual contribution was received. The initial proposal was for USD 50 million, but by coincidence, a proposal for a Central Emergency Relief Fund of USD 50 million was simultaneously proposed at the UN. In view of comments from donors, the final IRA proposal was reduced to USD 30 million. This proposal was duly approved by the CFA.

The innovation of this approach was that, with support from the IRA, emergency operations could be implemented immediately before contributions were actually received. I will leave it to historians to calculate how many lives were saved as a result of this innovation.

### **Financing Against Confirmed Contribution (1996)**

The immediate problem for emergency operations was solved by the approval of the IRA, but problems remained for development programmes. Development programmes would also suffer if commitments were not made until a contribution was received. It must have been in this context that Ingram wanted to leave at least USD 100 million operating cash. The notion that increased administrative and programme support burdens created by ever-increasing emergency operations could not be met by a portion of the one-third cash of the general pledge was already evident to the governing body by the imposition of a 4 percent (later 5 percent) charge on contributions designated for emergency operations. This idea was further implemented after the completion of Ingram's tenure.

Catherine Bertini took over as Executive Director in 1992. While there was surplus cash than USD 100 million, she realized that the financing arrangement was not sustainable. She continued the consultation with donors on Long-term Financing that Ingram had started. Following a series of informal consultations in 1992 and 1993, the governing body decided to form a Formal Working Group on Long-term Financing in December 1994. The Chairman of CFA, John Bailey, chaired the formal working group and worked throughout 1995. I was fortunate to be a part of the group of people supporting and advising the formal working group. Gary Eidet, together with his Financial Analyst, Donna Ducharme, worked closely with the working group. One of the final decisions of the governing body was the approval of RLTF in December 1995 (CFA: 40/5). (December 1995 was the last session of the CFA; a new Executive Board was established from 1996).

Many innovative aspects of RLTF could be topics of another story. I will dwell on its early financing aspect. One of the features of the new RLTF was the concept of an Operational Reserve for working capital. The WFP balance sheet had a symbolic Operational Reserve of USD one million. Subsequently, under the new policy, an Operational Reserve of USD 57 million (arrived at through a rigorous

calculation of cash flows at that time) was created (WFP/EB.A/97/4-D). The Operational Reserve could be used to advance funds from approved programmes and projects on the basis of confirmed contributions. The early financing mechanism created for emergency operations through the establishment of the IRA had reduced lead time by several months. The advent of the Operational Reserve under the new RLTF did the same for development and other programmes. Utilization of the Operational Reserve to start the implementation of a programme based on the confirmation of a contribution, and not waiting for the receipt of a contribution, was estimated to reduce lead time (between confirmation and actual receipt of contributions) for procurement and transport by an average of two months.

### **Advance Financing for Support Services (1999)**

A review of RLTF in 1999 proposed several improvements. One of the improvements was the reallocation of certain Indirect Support Costs to Direct Support Costs, primarily in country offices. While Indirect Support Cost was synonymous with Programme Support and Administrative Cost, financed by Operational Reserve, there was no such mechanism for financing Direct Support Costs without that identification of confirmed contributions. Therefore, a Direct Support Cost Advance Financing Facility was introduced in 1999 (WFP/EB.1/99/4-D). This allowed a smoother running of country offices while earning Direct Support Costs from various programmes implemented throughout the year.

### **Advance Financing for Working Capital (2004)**

WFP continued the pursuit of more efficiency. Another review of the financial framework, including a review of the business process, was undertaken during 2002-2003. One of the conclusions from the review was that operations would be run much more effectively if advances could be made earlier, i.e., when needed and not when confirmed by donors. Therefore, a mechanism was introduced to make advances to programmes on the basis of contributions forecasted for those particular operations, and applied as a pilot in 2003. After one year of experience, it was made a regular feature of business at WFP (WFP/EB.1/2005/5-C). The availability of advance financing based on forecasted contributions, without waiting for a formal confirmation of contributions, was estimated to reduce lead time (between forecast by WFP and confirmation by the donor) by an average of four months (WFP/EB.1/005/5-C/para 31). The said review also states that 20 percent more beneficiaries were assisted with the same amount of funding due to the early financing of working capital.

### **Forward Purchase Facility (2008)**

The cost of food was the primary element of project cost. Advance financing from the Working Capital Financing Facility would be used primarily for the procurement of food. WFP then explored the possibility of purchasing food, based on past trend and prospective future needs, even before the operation was started. Therefore, a portion of the Working Capital Financing Facility was

utilized, even without a specific forecast of a contribution, to pre-purchase food (WFP/EB.2/2010/5/B-1/para 16). A review of the working of the Forward Purchase Facility indicated that the facility generated a savings of 53 days (between the receipt of pre-purchased food and food purchased after utilizing the working capital financing facility based on forecasted contribution) (WFP/EB.2/2010/5/B-1/para 17).

### **Further Consolidation (2010)**

Based on the operational experience of two years, the size of the Working Capital Financing Facility was increased. At the same time, Operational Reserve and Direct Support Cost Advance Facility were consolidated in a single facility for support services.

### **Segregation of Clarity (2014)**

Additional modification was introduced in 2014 as the agency was getting involved in more cash-based transfers (CBT). The Working Capital Financing Facility was segregated into three different facilities: Global Commodity Management Facility, Working Capital Financing Facility, and Corporate Services Financing Facility (WFP/EB.1/2014/4-A/1).

### **Country Portfolio (under Integrated Roadmap)(2016)**

Most recently, WFP has adopted an Integrated Roadmap (IRM) to align the agency's objectives with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and develop a Country Strategy for each country that includes various activities—commodity as well as cash based, emergency, and developmental activities.

There are various aspects of innovations, but one consistent theme has been to be more effective in delivering services to beneficiaries. A simple tally of the estimated savings in lead time, through a confirmed contribution mechanism introduced in 1996 (two months), through an advance financing mechanism introduced in 2004 (four months), and through the Forward Purchase Facility introduced in 2008 (53 days), shows that beneficiaries get the support almost eight months earlier now than 20 years ago because of these innovative financial arrangements. These financial innovations can be considered part of the elements that have made WFP an effective humanitarian agency in the world.

## Commodity Tracking

**Michele Mercaldo**



Michele Mercaldo, WFP/Ala Kheir

After Suresh's invitation to the new Oral History Project and my expression of interest to participate, I started to doubt my proposal to contribute on Commodity Tracking. After all, Commodity Tracking is implicit in all World Food Programme (WFP) actions, viz., beneficiary needs, donor contributions, programming and procurement releases, and transport activities for final deliveries to beneficiaries.

While reading a book on the development of the Art of Painting in the XII-/XIII centuries, I was enlightened by the fact that innovations in such art happened in that period and I was consequently encouraged to submit this contribution. I am, anyhow, a little uneasy to write about what innovation I contributed in this respect, but with apologies to readers, I would like to write instead about my efforts in such adventure.

After I ended my work in the ship broking firm providing services to WFP for chartering tonnage for the transport of WFP commodities and started work at a shipping agency in Fiumicino, the WFP chartering staff, knowing of my precarious situation, requested my services. The firm mentioned above loaned me to WFP for a few short periods over the following two to three years, and my work was basically to dig into transport paper files to obtain statistical reports on forwarding agents/carriers/suppliers activities. Such information could be obtained by reports from the WFP Information System (WIS) at the time operating at WFP, but the extraction was very difficult and time consuming, and only a few people knew how to do it. Therefore, I suggested that it would be

more appropriate for shipping staff to keep, in real time, records of the activity of the parties mentioned above using limited working hours, but having quick access to data when needed, and even avoiding to hire me every now and then. Nevertheless, I continued to be hired for short periods to dig into the paper files until the day when I helped Amir Abdullah with the first commodity tracking for the Southern African Emergency as mentioned in the previous Oral History Project book. In 1993, I was first hired for longer periods of six months, mostly dedicated to reassessing all the laytime accounting with Receiving Countries (in those times the receivers at discharge were countries and not WFP itself) and, in addition, to teach new staff how to properly perform the laytime accounting with owners/suppliers/port stevedores.

That was also the time when WFP activity increased exponentially with more bulk/breakbulk cargo, more liner (containerized) shipments. In 1994, Torben Janholt joined WFP as the new Chief of Shipping, while a position in shipping opened unexpectedly when Kim Fredriksson left for personal reasons. I applied for the fixed term position and was luckily hired. Torben reassessed the work of the unit by dividing the staff into three sections: Charter/Liner/Control. Claus Budtz was placed in charge of control and I was his deputy. This unit was charged with Project Releases/Programming and Shipping Instructions Releases/Liaising with Donor Appointed Suppliers (at the time most of the cargoes were in-kind) and Reporting and Statistics.

Mr. Janholt agreed that records should be kept in real time, so I started to record, for every year, the following data:

1. List of Charter Shipments
2. List of Liner Shipments
3. Statistics of Brokers/Carriers/Forwarding Agents Performances, Average Freights, Commodities Moved by Origin/Destinations, and others when required.

Additionally, on my own, I also started the overall list of all Shipping Instructions issued with Project Number/Receiving Country/Quantities/Carriers/Dates of Expected Sailing/Actual Sailing/Expected Arrival/Actual Arrival.

This list had some initial difficulties. Some staff in my unit reproached me, stating that I was wasting time doing something that could be obtained from a WIS report. However, I was so confident in what I was doing that I told everybody that I would eventually do it after work hours and continued accordingly. Not very long after, the same people acknowledged that it was much easier for them to look at my report than the WIS report for those data. Mr Janholt then requested Operations staff to ensure, in his words, "that every paper entering the room should end on Mike's desk." It was still the time when email was unavailable and communication was done by phone, fax or telex.

The list was widely distributed to headquarters and country offices. By working for a whole weekend after a vacation I took some time before I retired, I calculated that recording all that data would need less than 90 minutes work per day. It was not a great effort after all. Such performance could not be achieved today. At the time, the quantities of single consignments were relatively large while presently these quantities are rather small, owing to the increased number of donors, according to the policy related to private donors, which implies a serious increase in the number of data to insert in a report.

After I retired in 2001, other staff managed to have a much more comprehensive report out of the WFP Information Network and Global Systems (WINGS), but the extraction was done less frequently. Presently, the relevant employees are working to provide similar reporting, retrofitting Logistic Execution Support System (LESS) changes into the report's logic. Meanwhile, headquarters shipping is still manually producing eight Level Three Emergency Reports for Syria/South Sudan/Yemen/Somalia/Nigeria/Sahel Shock Response/Bangladesh-Myanmar and the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) deliveries. In addition to the usual ocean consignment and arrival details, such reports also contain one table showing the expected arrival per week/port/commodity/project, and as many graphs as necessary per coming month, listing the overall quantity due to arrive at the port versus the port capacity to move cargo to inland destinations. This allows field staff to be alerted when too much cargo is arriving against actual capacity to move it out of port. I personally believe that it will not be easy to produce such complete extractions from corporate systems, present or future. In fact, manual Commodity Tracking reports are also released weekly by local offices in Port Sudan / Djibouti / Somalia / Mombasa / Dar es Salaam / Douala / Durban / Beira, and presumably for the same reason too.

To end this contribution, I must acknowledge that, even if I had had the initial idea, my effort became suitable to WFP's activities only because of the help I received from my colleagues in shipping, and from the field staff who regularly provided me with information on the arrival of consignments and, most of all, corrected misprints and other errors/omissions I made every now and then. They have been, and still are, the real innovators.

## The Birth and Growth of Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping

**Pablo Recalde**



Pablo Recalde, WFP/Emilia Casella

Innovation is often the outcome of circumstances. I believe the notion and idea of its analysis existed, but the creation of Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) was accidental rather than the outcome of a well planned, systematic, researched and thoughtful procedure. It was certainly motivated by a large supply of food aid during that period. The success of VAM speaks volumes to the issue of the then flexible organisational culture at WFP, where new ideas were entertained and there were accommodating control systems that allowed them to flourish.

I happen to be in the right place at the right time. I was posted to Mozambique at the time. It so happened that Broniek Szynalski, during one of his visits as head of emergencies at the time, got a glimpse of what I was doing in the country office: geo-referencing all of our projects with a Geographic Information System and linking them to a database. I was brought to the World Food Programme (WFP) headquarters in 1994 where I was given a small room in the attic of our then headquarters in the Cristoforo Colombo and given a very broad mandate "to develop the idea of a vulnerability analysis capacity for WFP." I must confess I was in shock.

I believe that VAM was the first of its kind in global food security and food aid history. Nothing similar existed prior to that—notwithstanding the 1973/4 International Food Conference that resulted in the creation of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations' (FAO) Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS). We can also point to the setting up of the Farming Early Warning System (FEWS) following the 1983/85 Sahel drought and famine. These systems were global in their nature, providing warning system at aggregate to avert famine mortalities of the 1973/74 and 1983/85 drought and famine. They lacked the capacity and instrument to guide project level decision tool. The VAM innovation was to fill in the gap.

I believe I served as a focal point within WFP, if I recall correctly, as there was no formal organisational structure created—only a “fund Centre” was created. We were a motivated group of people: Carol Tecchia; Domenico Palumbo; Chris Huddart and myself. This core support staff helped dispense the fund and collate data. An Italian firm provided technical support to the installation of a Geographic Information System (GIS) and linking the data to geographical features.

All subsequent staff came after the “VAM beast” was created and they ensured that the innovation was sustained, took shape, institutionalized and performed. Most of the subsequent staff were hired as “Emergency Programme Officers” until after the year 2000 when VAM became a recognized feature of WFP operations.

My role during this initial period was mainly to present the products and gather funding and support to sustain and expand our presence in the field through the production of analytical products, thematic maps and presentations. I believe that through this process VAM was able to nurture itself within an organisational system that was not supportive by all measures. It managed to provide services and made itself relevant, transitioning from “smoking mirrors” to a respectable service provider. During the period (approximately) 1998–2000 VAM moved from being labeled as “smoking mirrors” to an important programme support tool. A period of incredible creativity was developing.

VAM's initial tool kit was big data – cartographic in nature and displaying secondary data using maps. During the initial period – 1994 to 1998 – the period of the BIG BANG – VAM counted with the collaboration of a few amazing, smart and dedicated people like Jeff Marzilli, John McHarris, Annalisa Conte, Raoul Baletto, Getachew Diriba in Mozambique, Howard Standen, Joyce Luma, and Leslie Elliot. A special mention here goes to my friend Martha Teas who paid the ultimate price for serving others, perishing in the bombing of the UN office in Baghdad. There are many others whose names now fade with age, but all had a profound impact on developing the unit.

By improving our understanding of the causes of hunger, WFP improved its targeting process by focusing on the right people at the right place and at the right time. Within this framework, the role of food assistance was carefully assessed, and VAM was called to identify the right place for intervention: geographic targeting; and the right people to be targeted: beneficiaries targeting. Moreover, since vulnerability analysis was also carried-out to understand the root causes of vulnerability, VAM contributed to the identification of appropriate activities, i.e., sectorial targeting.

VAM analysis clarified that vulnerability is a multi-dimensional problem, and as a result of that, not all the causes of vulnerability can be addressed using food assistance. In this sense, it was accepted that food assistance might be appropriate as an immediate or short-term response to food insecurity (e.g. to save lives), but of no or little impact towards addressing the causes of food insecurity (e.g. civil unrest). This meant that vulnerability analysis went beyond the identification of vulnerable areas and population groups.

Based on the causes of vulnerability, the analysis also provided country offices with information about the appropriateness of food aid to address food insecurity; helped with making decisions on whether to use food aid to tackle transitory or structural causes of food insecurity, and helped with the identification of the intervention sectors. It was because of such understanding that the VAM unit became an integral part of WFP, because it had to be fully involved in its decision-making process, and not just a technical unit providing ad-hoc assistance to staff.

It is important to state that VAM benefited in no minor way from the collaboration and constant support of the FEWS project, in particular Frank Riley and Gary Eilerts who mentored and directed much of what became the initial analytical outline of the unit. Once the initial FEWS project closed, many VAM units hired staff from FEWS 1, and this boosted our analytical and operational capacity enormously. It also gave us access to critical funding.

In the short-term and beyond its specific activities in partner countries, VAM initiated a series of on-going activities intended to improve the overall quality and usefulness of VAM analytical products:

- Defining Programme Information Needs
- Identifying Best Practices; Linking with Partners
- Developing Technical Guidelines; Ensuing Core Competencies
- Developing User Guides
- Developing Better and More Standardized Training Processes

In the longer-term, and in response to programme requirements and the changing aid environment, with cash and vouchers becoming ever more prominent, VAM evolved towards the Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA), but that is another story.

In recent years, the information collection and management portion of VAM has taken prominence once more and interesting innovations such as mobile VAM have become a sought after commodity.

The VAM unit remains a core structure of WFP and is today a necessity in all of our operations. VAM has not only carried through current WFP practices, it has also defined many of them, as demonstrated by the number of now top WFP managers who transited and developed through that school of thinking.

## Putting Women in the Lead to End Hunger

### Gretchen Bloom

*Gender equality is a prerequisite for a world of zero hunger – for all women, men, girls and boys to be able to exercise their human rights, including the right to adequate food.*

*This is why the pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment, under Sustainable Development Goal 5, is central to fulfilling WFP’s mandate. WFP promotes gender equality through leveraging our food assistance to bridge the gender gap.*

*(WFP Website)*



Gretchen Bloom-Kabul (Middle), WFP/Photolibrary/Alex

A very important innovation in the World Food Programme’s (WFP) work to end hunger has been the inclusion of women as leaders at all levels, starting with women as beneficiaries of food assistance, then as agents of change in moving to food security, facilitated by WFP’s hiring of many more female staff. Here is the story of how this happened, moving from a focus on Women in Development through the important Beijing Commitments to Women to today’s Gender Equality Policy.

### **Beginning with Women in Development**

At the Women’s Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi in 1985, WFP contributed a Women in Development (WID) analysis of ongoing projects and a Plan of Action to strengthen WFP’s operations. Later, WFP developed a WID Policy and Sectoral

Guidelines that were endorsed by the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA). A WID Officer was hired to manage this new focus.

However, when Catherine Bertini arrived in Rome in April 1992 to take up the position of Executive Director, she was not briefed on the WID approach. During her first month on the job, she also quickly learned that WFP was not accustomed to working with women leaders, as only 17 percent of professional staff were female at the beginning of 1992.

### **Working with Women to End Hunger**

Prior to 1992, WFP had never had a Mission Statement. James Ingram had spent much of his tenure as Executive Director getting WFP reconstituted from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), which happened in 1992, just as Bertini was arriving to take the reins.

When senior staff realized this lacuna, they decided to create a Mission Statement, with John Powell taking the lead. Buried near the bottom of the Mission Statement was what WFP began promoting as its mission: End Hunger. This was the beginning of WFP's focus on women.

Here is how it happened, as explained by Catherine Bertini in an interview:

"Jacques Diouf was new at FAO in January 1994. He said that such a mission and goal – to End Hunger – was overreaching WFP's mandate and was an impossible goal. I replied that, if ending hunger could be done by one agency, it would have been achieved long ago, but that we each must do our part.

"Once WFP had a Mission Statement, we had to 'unpack' it to make sure our work was in line with our mission. Already I had asked about our reporting. 'Why do we report tonnes of food delivered as opposed to people served?' Now that our mission was to end hunger, we quickly changed our measurement units to add people.

"Then we asked ourselves: 'How does hunger end?' Surely it doesn't end just because we move a shipload of food from the port of New Orleans to the port in Djibouti, or even if we move that food on trucks from Djibouti to a warehouse.

"The answer was obvious: HUNGER ENDS WHEN PEOPLE EAT. People eat after someone cooks. Someone cooks because there is food and water to use. Clearly, then, we had to partner with the cooks. That opened up our entire world to women, as they were virtually the cooks. This became WFP's business purpose: If we were going to end hunger, we needed to get food into the hands of women, who cook the food and feed their hungry families.

"As women were not generally in leadership positions, nor were they the people with whom we were talking, WFP created ways to reach and listen to women—for example, through Mothers Clubs in Latin America. We also convinced chiefs in South Sudan to compose committees of 15 members, a majority of whom

would be women, to decide which families were the most in need when we dropped limited loads of food in their fields from C130 airplanes based in Lokichokio, Kenya. We insisted on this because women knew best who was hungry.

“We developed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with all the major food-delivering NGOs that were our partners, and we wrote into those MOUs the guidelines we used ourselves—to deliver food wherever possible to the senior woman in the household.

“By 1995, we had been noticing significant differences in what women did with the food they received versus what men did. For instance, in the large Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire, distribution was by village. The mayor received bulk food for his entire population in the camp. He then distributed the food through one or two levels of village governance (all men) before it was distributed to the families. In these camps, WFP observed thousands of bags of food for sale, in their original packaging.

“However, in smaller camps in Tanzania, where food was distributed to each family through the senior female in the household, very little food was reported seen outside family settings. This reinforced our views that food should be distributed to women.”

### **Hiring Females to Lead in Staff Positions**

Catherine Bertini was determined to change that reality and get food into the hands of women as the most expeditious way to end hunger. One way to do that was to get more women into leadership roles on WFP’s staff. Here, in her words, is how the change started:

“In April, my first month on the job, I was asked to attend my first reassignment exercise. In advance of that meeting, I asked my secretary for one piece of information: a list of names and postings of all the WFP women staff who were at P5 level and above.<sup>2</sup> I went to the reassignment meeting with that list – of six – in my folder.

“The post under discussion was that of the P5 Deputy Director of the Middle East Bureau. This was 1992. The region, with the exception of the Palestinian conflict, was reasonably peaceful; and the WFP Regional Bureau was still based in Rome.

“I inquired about the qualifications needed for this position and was told it would be helpful if the officer spoke Arabic and French, was experienced in development work, and had a background in economics as there were a lot of food-for-work projects in the region. When one candidate was proposed for that position, I was told that he was an acceptable officer who would at least do an

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<sup>2</sup> Ms. Maria Grazie Iuri was promoted to D1 as a Service Chief in Finance early in 1992 by Jim Ingram. She then served as the Acting Director of Finance from November 1993 to Summer 1994.

adequate job in the role. The man proposed for the position had French and some development experience, but that was it.

"So I took out my short list of women and asked whether any of these people had the necessary qualifications. We looked at the list and came to Mona Hammam, a P5 level officer. The conversation went like this:

"Well, Mona is the Women in Development (WID) officer."

"Yes. Well, she works in WID. So? Tell me about her."

"Well, she was born in Egypt and is an American citizen, so she has Arabic and French. And she has a PhD in developmental economics."

" Well, she seems just right to me."

" But she is in WID."

" Well, isn't that basic development? Wouldn't that be appropriate for the role?"

" Yes, but she wouldn't want to do it."

" How do you know?"

" Well, she likes WID."

" OK, but does that mean she wouldn't want to take this on? Have you ever asked her?"

" Well, no."

"So I asked Mona, who thought about it, and said 'yes.' She was the first woman to be an officer in a bureau."

### **Setting Hiring Quotas for Women and National Staff**

For this approach to work, WFP needed to take further steps. Here, as Bertini explains, is how and why WFP arrived at setting hiring quotas:

"In 1994, I visited India. Mike Ellis, the WFP Country Director, took me to Rajasthan. There I sat on the ground talking, through a female interpreter, to desperate women. They had so little to eat, their husbands drank and beat them, and they could not adequately feed and clothe their children. Mike could not join me. He watched from a respectful distance. Why? Because he was a man.

"For me, this highlighted the need to have more women on our staff. And once women became central to our mission, we had to insure that we hired more women. It had not been enough for us to talk about this, even though it was based on frequent statements by the Secretary General that we should have 50/50 parity.

“One year, our Human Resources Director brought me a list of the international staff who had been hired in the field in the prior year. There were exactly 100, with only three women! That was the beginning of a new process. I very much wanted to delegate responsibility to the field offices, but I also had a responsibility to ensure quality.

“WFP needed to create a transparent system where quality candidates would be hired rather than relying on the ‘Old Boys Network.’ In Kenya, for example, some of the new hires, friends of country office staff, had come to Kenya to go on safari! So WFP started a roster system. Candidates selected would remain on the roster for two years. Country offices could hire whomever they wanted—off the roster.

“Then WFP also put in quotas—yes, quotas. I directed that every hiring manager have, in his/her performance objectives, that it would be an adequate performance rating if 50 percent females and 40 percent developing country nationals were newly hired. This is how we got to 39 percent women by the time I left WFP in 2002—because it was part of the performance appraisal process.

“By the way, the 50 percent quota for women was in all the Secretary General and UN documents. But, as a voluntarily funded agency, we had no requirements for nationality representation. However, I felt strongly that we had to have an international staff that was reasonably representative of the countries in which we were working. It was neither prudent nor safe to be a group of white Westerners calling all the shots in developing countries.”

By 2002, this approach had paid off: the WFP senior staff totalled 22 people, half of which were developing country nationals and one-third were women. At the highest categories (P5 and above), the percentages had improved, from 9.2 percent in 1992 (with only one woman at D1) to 18.9 percent in December 1996, and 23.3 percent in August 1998 (with 13 women above P-5). At the very top, there were two men—Namanga Ngongi and Jean-Jacques Graisse; and two women—Jessie Mabutas and Catherine Bertini.

Country offices were encouraged to hire women in “nontraditional jobs”—e.g., running warehouses, driving. In countries with huge disparities between men and women, country offices were directed to hire 75 percent women in all jobs until WFP was closer to parity.

Not surprisingly – considering the nature of the work in the field and the historical reluctance of some managers to hire women – the percentage of women in country offices in mid-1998 was only 22.5 percent compared to 39.5 percent at headquarters. Despite early pushes for more female staff at the field level, managers claimed that they had difficulty finding qualified women candidates, resulting in a drop in the percentage of female food monitors from 40 percent in 2003 to 30 percent in 2006.

## Moving Away from a Male Dominated World Food Programme



From Left: Valerie Sequeira, Rehana Tanwir, Mona Hammam, Catherine Bertini, Judith Katona-Apte, Maria Grazie Luri and Zoraida Mesa, WFP/Photolibrary

One of the reasons it was difficult to hire women was that they did not like working in a male-dominated culture with a few opportunities for promotion. In fact, WFP was labelled by some as “an organisation of boys with their toys.”

In an interview with Bertini, she explained vividly how she learned this reality early on in her tenure as Executive Director:

“One of the first UN documents I reviewed, when sitting at my desk in April 1992 in the old WFP Headquarters on Cristoforo Colombo, was the chart detailing the percentages of female international professional staff employed by each UN agency. With the exception of the highly knowledgeable and competent secretaries in the Office of the Executive Director, all of the other staff in that office and the senior staff were men, except one female D1. (There were seven D2s in the entire organisation at that time.)

“I inquired of a couple of the senior staff, during a briefing meeting, why WFP’s female percentage was not closer to that of UNICEF and UNHCR, both of which had statistics in the 30 percent range. Their work was like ours, so I wondered why our staff statistics were so different. The answer was:

“Well, at WFP we do guy things.”

“What are guy things?”

“Well, you know, we have to move trucks and trains and ships and airplanes. Women aren’t involved in that, so we hire men.”

“Well, before I leave here, we will find women who can manage trucks, trains, ships and airplanes.”

### **Launching the Commitments to Women in Beijing**

In September 1995, the United Nations organized the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. In the spring, Gertrude Mongella, the Secretary General of the Conference, organized a meeting with the female UN agency heads. She asked them to develop specific commitments for what their organisations were going to do differently with new actions to improve lives and opportunities for women.

WFP began its pre-Beijing efforts by reviewing its own work to decide how to improve programming as it related to women beyond the Mission Statement and the effort to reach cooks/women. WFP began to prepare the WFP Commitments to Women, as Mongella had requested, carrying out studies under Broniek Szynalski’s leadership. These studies demonstrated, in many cases, that:

- Gender had not been mainstreamed in WFP-supported projects;
- Efforts to reach the very poorest women with relief assistance had sometimes failed;
- Women rarely controlled or made decisions regarding projects and food aid delivery; and
- WFP-supported development projects did not necessarily promote women’s empowerment.

Some of the commitments were fairly easy to determine and not very controversial. For instance, school-feeding would have the goal of providing food for 50 percent girls and 50 percent boys. But other commitments took more discussions and review. For example, Food for Work was mostly distributed to male labourers, so a goal of 50/50 percent males and females was thought to be unrealistic. Hence, the goal for female labourers became 25 percent.

WFP sent a delegation to the Beijing Conference in September 1995. Catherine Bertini gave a plenary speech, entitled “Women Eat Last,” which included the new WFP Commitments to Women. Here are some quotes from the speech:

**Women Eat Last:** In almost every society in the world, women gather the food, prepare the food, and serve the food. Yet most of the time, women eat last. A woman feeds her husband, then her children, and finally – with whatever is left – she feeds herself. Even pregnant women and breast-feeding women often eat last when, of all times, they should eat first.

**We Need Action, Not More Analysis:** Yes, women are victims in the most fundamental ways, but there is a point – and we have reached it –

where we have to stop using so much energy describing the plight of women and move on to strategies and solutions. For all our policy papers and guidelines on women, we have made only a small dent in the problem. We hear all too many excuses on how projects to empower women will not work. It is time to trade excuses for action. It is time to stop writing guidelines and get to work.

**Let's Have No Illusions:** We can't easily change the underlying beliefs and prejudices that do so much damage to women worldwide. We cannot quickly change attitudes, but we can change behaviour. At the World Food Programme we have recognized what a valuable tool food aid can be in changing behaviour.

In many poorer countries, food is money, food is power. In some of our most successful food aid projects, we literally pay families who do not believe in educating their daughters to send those girls to school. A little free cooking oil can go a long way. We trade a five-liter can of oil for 30 days of school attendance by a young girl. Yes, it's bribery. We don't apologize for that. We are changing behaviour...each small change in behaviour will one day pay off in a change of attitude.

**Conclusion:** Women are the sole breadwinners in one household in three worldwide. They produce 80 percent of the food in Africa, 60 percent in Asia, and 40 percent in Latin America. Women hold together our families, our communities, our societies. What could be more right, more just, than for us to create a world in which women don't eat last?

To get WFP's food assistance to the people who needed it most meant getting food to women who feed their families and who were often bypassed by local men who held power and could direct valuable food assistance into their hands. Stereotypical though it may sound, many studies have shown that food in the hands of men is often sold in markets to permit them to gamble or purchase guns, alcohol, and women. This was the rationale for the Commitments to Women.

Once the commitments were launched in Beijing, WFP needed to implement them. Here are some of the initial steps taken at WFP:

- Country offices and units at headquarters were asked to define the steps required to meet the Commitments to Women and to develop measurable indicators to monitor progress.
- A Gender Task Force (GTF) was established to advise on overall strategy, to develop a WFP Action Plan and monitoring mechanisms, to mobilize support, to advise implementers, and to monitor and report on the process of implementation of the WFP Action Plan.
- Senior Gender Advisers were hired to manage the implementation.

- The Gender Advisers undertook training on the Commitments to Women in country and regional offices in English, French, and Spanish.
- The GTF sent information on gender concepts and tools for social and gender analysis to the country offices to help them design their individual Gender Action Plans (GAPs), due by the end of February 1996. WFP then launched an Action Plan, which was reflected in the UN system-wide medium term Action Plan.

However, despite the splash made in Beijing by WFP, the Commitments to Women were not a big hit amongst all WFP staff. It was a struggle to get WFP staff to be willing to make the changes needed.

### **Moving from a Focus on Women to Gender Mainstreaming**

By 2002, WFP needed to move on, to renew, modify or dispense with the Commitments to Women. A thorough review was undertaken that led to the conclusion that the commitments remained highly relevant for WFP and should therefore be maintained and enhanced.<sup>3</sup>

### **Gender Policy with Enhanced Commitments to Women (2003-2007)**

A set of Enhanced Commitments to Women (ECW) was thus produced for the years 2003-2007, with a combination of positive measures for women and gender mainstreaming measures, of three types. Five of the eight ECW were targeted measures for women, focusing on nutrition, girls' education, Food for Work, training, control of food, and women's decision-making. Two others were cross-cutting, focusing on gender mainstreaming and advocacy. And one final ECW called for gender equality in staffing.

The Gender Policy with the ECW was evaluated in 2007. WFP was commended for having enhanced the visibility of women and girls, not just as vulnerable beneficiaries but as critical contributors to household and community food security, an essential foundation for gender equality.

Women's advocates recognized the risks of focusing on gender equality: women may lose visibility, resources for women's advancement may disappear into the mainstream, and it is difficult to evaluate efforts to promote gender equality. Nonetheless, WFP moved ahead, shifting from a total focus on women to one on gender equality.

**Gender Policy (2009):** A new gender policy was promulgated in 2009, with this long and clear title: *WFP Gender Policy: Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Addressing Food and Nutrition Challenges*. The stated rationale of the policy was to strive for greater gender equality as a crucial step towards achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration.

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<sup>3</sup> The following women have headed the Gender Office at WFP since 2002, when Catherine Bertini left, until 2018: Christa Maria Raeder (January 2002 – January 2005), Adama Yamouna Diop-Faye (January 2005 – March 2006), Isatou Jallow (July 2006 – January 2013), Sonsoles Ruedas (February 2013 – October 2015) and Kawinzi Muiu (November 2015 – present).

**WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020):** WFP's current gender policy continues to support gender equality and getting women access to the benefits of WFP's food assistance, with a gender transformative approach that helps bridge the gender gap in food security and nutrition.

**Conclusion: Impact of Innovation on Ending Hunger**

In February 2002, as Catherine Bertini was preparing to leave WFP, the in-house newspaper, Pipeline, did a feature story on her, entitled "A Decade of Achievement." It began with the following quote by Bertini:

"If you're going to solve poverty, you have to partner with the women. But that in itself is not enough. We must also support women as agents of change in their communities. To break out of the cycle of poverty, women must be empowered."

WFP's Mission, to END HUNGER, is best achieved by targeting resources to women. Women are the key to change; they are the people in the family who are the most dedicated to ensuring that children eat and get educated.

A historic innovation, the WFP Commitments to Women, was put in place to achieve this goal. It has been followed by subsequent gender policies, produced by the WFP Gender Unit. This change in nomenclature and focus was made as a result of a resolution passed by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997 calling for gender mainstreaming by all UN agencies.

WFP can be proud of a legacy of numerous achievements in the fight to end hunger: one involved putting women in the lead, in the field as agents of change, and in WFP offices as leaders.

## **Life Beyond Resource Allocation Model: Positioning the World Food Programme in a Broader Role Beyond its Actual Level of Resources**

**Hannah Laufer-Rottman**



I worked with the UN for a total of 29 years (1976-2005)—27 years of which was spent at the World Food Programme (WFP). I have always been a “foodie,” and even today, I have a passionate relationship with food in all its dimensions and amazing complexity. At the same time, probably from birth, I have a strong commitment to human rights, and therefore my food passion includes the profound desire for food to be available to everyone on this planet – not out of charity – but simply because it is right. Working for WFP all these years was in a way easy and exciting because I had the pleasure of bringing food to people in need. It was a perfect fit for me.

I have often attempted to contribute to discussions on the most cost-effective ways of delivering food to people in need, in a move to make governments more accountable and responsible for the food security of their people, and for the global community to take part in these discussions and proffer solutions. The approach was how to do more with less.

When I arrived in Ecuador in 1997, after over five years in Rome, I found two small country programmes: a Food for Work project and a small school-feeding programme. We covered about 50,000 people in a few provinces. I found none of that to be the best kind of answer that an organisation like WFP could provide, considering the devastating effects of food insecurity on hundreds of thousands of people at the time. I felt we could do more. I was proud of the WFP and UN flags and convinced that we had to leave our marks in that country.

But this was also a time when WFP started its phasing down/phasing out plan and introduced the concept of RAM—resource allocation model. Dozens of country offices were closed and lists of other countries to follow were prepared. Limited resources were available for development. Ecuador had only a small food

allocation and it was a country at risk of being phased out. I prevented this from happening, and 20 years later, WFP is still present in Ecuador.

Ecuador is one of 83 countries worldwide where WFP strives to achieve its mission of providing:

- Food-for-life in emergency situations.
- Food-for-growth for the most vulnerable people during the most critical times of their lives.
- Food enabling development through the promotion of self-reliance and community building.

While the mission of WFP is universal, throughout the developing world each WFP Country Office operates in a vastly different environment. Thus, each country office must find the proper recipe for success in order to:

- Effectively carry out activities within its environment
- Judge and manage the political situation
- Establish structurally sound partnerships
- Conduct programme advocacy while ensuring accountability
- Maintain a committed and professional staff
- Diversify resources
- Use modern management systems.

The innovation took place during a five-year period between 1997-2002 when I was the WFP Representative in Ecuador. During this assignment, I strongly advocated for universal coverage of social programmes and successfully negotiated a USD 24 million donation from the US Government, which I leveraged to secure an additional USD 10 million in government counterpart funds. This enabled WFP-Ecuador to feed 1.5 million people. This was a service for which we were paid from a portion of the funds that we were managing, freeing resources that WFP needed for other operations in poorer countries.

The basic idea of the innovation was to *do more with less*. At that time WFP country allocations were based on the RAM model, and because of a combined lack of resources for development and the per capita income of Ecuador, WFP food aid was diminished to a point where it allowed only for small projects with marginal benefits. There was a very high possibility that Ecuador would fall on the list of countries where WFP had started to close operations.

As the WFP Representative, I reversed this situation, and during my tenure we became one of the largest international organisations in Ecuador, impacting millions, mainly vulnerable children.

My personal role was to advocate for the poor and hungry in Ecuador, fight for universal school-feeding, use the WFP mission and flag with pride to establish a relationship of trust with both the Government of Ecuador and our donor—the US Government. My main message as a UN organisation was: it is our obligation,

our mandate to fight for all poor and hungry children, irrespective of our amount of resources. In June 2002, upon my departure from Ecuador, I wrote a Concept Paper as a testimony of our work and as a way to document our success. The entrepreneurial vision that WFP-Ecuador used to feed the poor and hungry, which can be replicated elsewhere, includes:

- Use WFP resources to establish new partnership agreements
- Build capacity of national and local counterparts
- Promote advocacy and policy dialogue with government and UN agencies
- Institutionalize a universal social safety net
- Create a national structure to coordinate all social feeding programmes.

The main idea behind the programme that I launched in Ecuador was to work “beyond RAM,” specifically to create a climate of synergies with other players whereby WFP demonstrates the capacity and assumes the role of coordinating – on behalf of the government – a national and ambitious food aid programme, well beyond the actual level of its donated resources. This was innovative because before that, the voice of WFP was directly linked to the level of donated resources and not to the actual needs of poor and hungry people. We were doomed to remain a rather uninteresting organisation within the UN system, with little capacity to impact people living in poverty and hunger. I had the profound conviction that WFP cannot limit its presence in a given country to the level of resources it contributes. As a UN organisation, our mission was global and we had to become the voice of people living in poverty and hunger. Not tapping into such power would have been a sin and a terrible loss of opportunity. The application of our strategy yielded astounding results. This included the development of:

- Stable partnerships with key Ecuadorian Government agencies
- Steady income from management services provided to social feeding programmes
- Permanent consultation in social policy dialogue with the Social Front—group of ministries dealing with social development agenda
- Coverage and institutionalization of a social safety net for nearly two million poor school and pre-school children, 100,000 pregnant and lactating women, 300,000 elderly, indigent, and street children
- Creation of the National Feeding Commission
- Formalization of the School Feeding Programme in the new education law
- Solidarity from other national and international donors

WFP-Ecuador became a major player and impacted millions of children (mainly infants and their mothers, and schoolchildren), and more importantly, contributed actively to the establishment of a sustainable national school-feeding programme under the auspices of the government. The programme still runs today, and it is thanks to what we established during my tenure that WFP still has a presence in Ecuador. The local staff that was part of our work remain

grateful because they were able to keep their job and perform it with pride. A positive development in the last year is the Government of Ecuador's commitment to increase funding for social investment—20 percent of its annual budget was allocated to the social sector.

The food programme that we managed in the beginning included the monetization of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) goods over a period of five years (a programme worth over USD 24 million—the largest in South America at the time), with the establishment of a national procurement plan for local foods to be distributed to participating schools (about 90 percent of all public schools) that included support to associations of local small farmers located near the schools, thereby creating a sustainable source of income for these farmers, and the use of local products conducive for children. The food programme included a second component for the industrial manufacturing of highly nutritious foods for infants, pregnant, and nursing mothers, with the participation of the private sector in competitive biddings. Apart from the food, the programme also had an enormous need for non-food components. We were successful in obtaining a Japanese grant for the production and distribution of local stoves and large cooking pots. Donations of plates and cups came from the US in large containers.

While we first managed the very large USDA donation of wheat, pulses and milk via national monetization, we gradually became the most visible partner of the Ecuadorian Government for the establishment and implementation of a national food aid programme, and we started to negotiate a new role for WFP: to attract and manage new financial resources from the government – via their annual budgetary allocations for school-feeding and feeding of vulnerable groups – as a solid partner, even without a WFP contribution. We secured a government counterpart funding for the USDA donation of USD 10 million. The government liked our work very much and trusted us as an organisation with a solid capacity - developed gradually - for providing a high quality and low risk (mainly low corruption risk since we were acting on behalf of the UN with strict oversight) service to the government for what was becoming a national priority for them. As stated above, the local staff is still grateful for the work we did together during that period, not only because they kept their job, but because they felt proud of working with WFP. They were motivated by the terrific results we were producing and by the high level of activity going on in our office. It was a vibrant and exciting atmosphere and everyone contributed to that spirit.

Former colleagues have told me that my work in Ecuador has become a model at WFP. Other countries have adopted this model. In recent months, a former colleague asked for my ideas concerning a future role for WFP in China, to ensure its continuing presence. I wrote a short outline - as Palms for Life Fund - about what that role could be. Since my contribution has been pre-selected I am including this note as an illustration of the power of WFP's role and mission as one of the largest UN agencies.

I also want to explain that I am a strong advocate for people's access to food as a basic human right—not as beneficiaries, but as participants.<sup>4</sup> I still advocate for this right under Palms for Life Fund. I firmly believe in my model and would welcome an opportunity to further explain it to the WFP management. I am convinced that it is the only sustainable model for WFP, granting it the role it deserves—a role to be the voice and advocate for people living in poverty and hunger on this planet; a role that is not sufficiently assumed and thereby preventing WFP from being a true global institution, an inspiration to member countries, with the capacity to impact more lives worldwide.

Despite the undeniable advances made by my innovation and the number of poor and hungry people we had the honour of serving, WFP-Ecuador continued to face obstacles that existed beyond the limits of our work at the time. These included:

- Corruption: Ecuador was named the 7th most corrupt country in the world (2001) where corrupt practices continuously went unpunished.
- Political Instability and Upheaval: Due to historic political instability in Ecuador, government agencies were weakened.
- Economic Crisis: The worst in over 50 years, leading to reduced purchasing power.
- El Niño: Flooding, drought and extreme weather effects damaged social and economic infrastructure.
- Poverty and Food Security: Poverty and food insecurity affected more than 50 percent of the country's population.
- Emigration: Ecuador started experiencing a migration crisis that left many children without parental guidance.
- Funding Limitations: As a Low-Income Food-Deficit Country (LIFDC), Ecuador received an average of USD 2 million annually from WFP. However, it was not enough to serve the needs of the country's many hungry citizens.

WFP-Ecuador learned that in order to best serve the poor and hungry through viable partnerships, it was necessary to:

- Develop and maintain a broad and permanent advocacy capacity, (right to food, to quality health and education, social responsibility)
- Raise funds from private and public sources (food and non-food items) and monitor expenditure of those funds
- Promote food security for all at all times
- Respond effectively to emergencies

In order to achieve this, it needed to develop a new business approach marked by both true social commitment and the capacity to respond to clients (seriousness, good management, promptness and quality).

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<sup>4</sup> In my last years with WFP I often advocated for banning the word "beneficiaries" in our development projects' literature and replacing it with "participants" which I found more appropriate and dignifying; certainly more in line with the idea of participative and sustainable development that we all adhered to. I was not successful. However, under Palms for Life we have proudly banned the use of the word "beneficiaries" throughout our work.

WFP Ecuador has demonstrated that the fight to end hunger needs to be conceived beyond the level of official resources it provides to a given country, because these are often insufficient to effectively reach the objective. The WFP flag allows WFP to advocate universally for the poor and hungry, to establish meaningful partnerships with those committed to the same cause and willing to invest for the poor and hungry, and to commit government funding for social programmes in a sustainable way.

## Security Awareness Training: Improving Staff Safety Around the World

Arlene Mitchell



WFP Truck Driver-Sierra Leone, WFP/Rein Skullerud

The World Food Programme (WFP) Security Awareness Training (SAT) was a mandatory training for all WFP staff—two days long for headquarters staff and three days for field staff. It was carried out from February 1999 through to at least the end of 2000, with sessions for new staff being held for some time after that.

As Chief of the Career Development and Training Unit (HRC) in the Human Resources Division, I held overall responsibility for the project. I had a key role in conceptualizing and designing the training, selling it to the Executive Staff team, and managing all aspects of its implementation (including a series of trainings for trainers who in turn trained WFP staff at headquarters and in the field). My role began – rather tentatively – in the second half of 1998 and ended in September 2000, when I was transferred to the school-feeding unit. The real heroes of the programme, however, were Carole Still, who worked with me in HRC; Arnold Vercken, who was the head of administration and had overall responsibility for security matters; and all 40 or so of the Security Awareness Trainers themselves.

The mandate to "do security training" came from Executive Director Catherine Bertini, who was determined to improve staff safety and reduce the number of

deaths of WFP staff in the course of carrying out their work. By 1998, WFP work had become extremely dangerous; many staff had been threatened, some taken hostage, or otherwise endangered. Food convoys were being fired upon; trucks and food were being stolen, etc. As I recall, by 1998 some 40 WFP staff had been killed in the line of duty—four that year alone.

In about mid-1998, it became clear that WFP would have a significant amount of “Extra-PSA” (Programme Support Fund) money that could be deployed flexibly. Bertini called for proposals to address a number of priority issues, including implementing needed improvements related to safety and security—upgrading facilities and procedures, communications, and providing training for staff. In August 1998, Bertini set up a Field Security Task Force chaired by Arnold Vercken to provide support and advice regarding security and safety, and regarding the design and implementation of the new training.

On behalf of HRC, I submitted a proposal for the training. I had some health problems going on, and it was about the same time that I took on a black Labrador puppy, Guido, who was in training to be one of Italy’s first guide (“seeing eye” or “service”) dogs—dogs that help disabled people move safely through life. Guido’s training required that he should always be with an adult, and that he should be exposed to typical work environments, public transport, etc., so that he was familiar with those environments when he began to work. Thanks to Judith Thimke (Headquarters Building Manager at the time), Guido was issued a building pass and went to work with me every day. Judith has a deaf family member who relies on a service dog, so she championed the idea of a WFP staff assisting with training, and she assisted in getting the approval of all the necessary staff committees. I think Guido might have been the first guide dog-in-training allowed at the UN! He was a great hit with most – but not all – WFP staff.

Regardless of the reasons, I am pretty sure my first submission on behalf of HRC was a bland and modest proposal for security training. The Executive Director asked us to come back with something more compelling, something that “could save lives.”

I consulted with the Career Development and Training team—especially Carole Still, who served as my “go to” person on such issues, and she turned out, I think, to be the most important person to the eventual success of the training. She and I hammered out the basics and negotiated our pretty radical proposal with the Field Security Task Force. I was still, relatively, a newcomer at WFP, having started there just a year earlier. Carole’s advice for negotiating the headquarters politics was critical. Her knowledge of WFP operations and staff around the world was astounding. And she was a logistical, financial, and training programme-planning powerhouse.

Arnold’s support was extremely important as well. Not only was he the Director of Administration, he also had great credibility with field staff—especially

logistics folks from his previous roles at WFP. He also cared deeply and was open to the ideas of others. He was a wonderful colleague to me and Carole—a perfect partner in getting the Security Awareness Training off the ground, and the second most important person to the eventual success of the training.

I still have a draft copy of the memo I sent on November 17, 1998, through Arnold Vercken, to the Executive Staff, with our proposal attached, outlining a radical approach: we would recruit up to 60 WFP staff members – international and national alike – to be trained as trainers and sent around the world in training teams to conduct a comprehensive safety and security training for all staff. It basically called for supervisors to release staff members selected to become trainers for a period of four months. Backfilling during their absence was to be paid if needed.

The fact that the proposal was approved was, I think, a fluke of luck, or because Executive Staff members were overworked. I was called to an Executive Staff meeting to explain the proposal two days after submitting the memo. It quickly became apparent to me (and I think to the Executive Director) that the others in the room – except Arnold – hadn't read or focused on the proposal. The Executive Director asked for comments, but there weren't many. She said she herself was impressed with the proposal. She asked if others would support the proposal, and as I recall, Arnold stepped up to say that he would. I think my boss, Dyane Dufresne, the Director of Human Resources, and possibly one other person also did.

The Executive Director then went around the room, asking the others, one by one, if they had comments or questions. Each seemed uncomfortable but basically said they could support it. Then, in response to a minor question or two – when it became clear that they were signing on to a programme that could require them to release staff for significant chunks of time – there was some effort to reverse the decision. But it was too late. The decision had been made.

We began recruiting trainers and staff to be trained as trainers later in November 1998. In December and January we designed the training (using materials from the UN Security Coordinator's (UNSECOORD) office and four or five consultants—a couple of training experts and a couple of security experts, and SAT kicked off with a bang in 1999. The first Training of Security Trainers (TOST) was held in January and February of 1999. Four TOSTs were held in 1999.

The 12 core training modules were: UN Security Management System; Personal and Family Security; Office and Facilities Security; Residential Security; Arrest, Detention and Hostage Situations; Fire Safety; Abuse of Power and Harassment; Coping with Stress in Emergency Situations; Driving Security; Communications; First Aid and Medical Issues; and Emergency Preparedness, Evacuation, and Survival Situations. The course was delivered over a period of three days in most country offices and sub-offices; two days at headquarters, where First Aid

and three “practical for field staff” sessions were not offered. The participation of all WFP staff was mandatory, including international and locally recruited staff, as well as those working for WFP under service contracts or special service agreements with UNDP at the time.

In addition to core training modules, SAT included specialized modules that were developed for WFP managers and others requiring training in specific areas such as Crisis Management, Travel Safety, Field Operations Safety Issues-Special Situations (Landmines and Military Weaponry), Convoy and Air Operations, Cash Movements, Security Responsibilities for Managers, and Coping with Stress in Emergency Situations for Managers. Only specified staff or groups of staff received one or more of these modules.

I don't have exact numbers, but it appears we trained and deployed at least 39 staff as SAT trainers in 1999. We were surprised at the number of staff who received two or three days of SAT. Again, the exact number is not available now, but by August 1998, we found out that we had already trained many more staff than Human Resources knew existed, and we weren't anywhere near done!

There were several innovative aspects of the training:

- Rather than using outside experts/consultants, the programme trained selected staff – national and international, and from all job titles – as trainers, and sent them in teams to country offices to train their colleagues. Not only was the training of trainers very empowering for the trainers (and apparently, helpful to their careers), but peer-to-peer training was very effective in reaching and teaching those they trained.
- Although WFP had a fairly standard practice of giving country-specific security briefings for those assigned to a country where security was a significant concern, and some staff members were sent to specialize training done by other organisations, there had been no in-depth security or related training for most staff prior to the 1999-2000 SAT.
- The TOST design was unique, intense, and very effective. First, the consultants introduced the content of a module, using specific experiential training techniques. Then they introduced the training philosophy and techniques, with pointers regarding how to use those techniques effectively. Then the trainees practiced using those training techniques to present the same module. Their sessions were critiqued by the consultants and by their peers. Then the cycle was repeated with the next module, the next techniques, and the practice training session, etc.

At the end of TOST, the trainers then presented the two-day SAT to groups of headquarters staff before being deployed in teams to country offices to implement the three-day trainings. Also, I bet TOST was the first and only training of trainers at the UN that included a guide dog-in-training!

(N.B., Not everyone made it through TOST. I “released” at least one would-be trainer who just couldn’t grasp the Abuse of Power and Harassment module and struggled with other modules as well. A couple of others dropped out for their own reasons; one or two were pulled out for other work priorities).

- The WFP SAT was apparently the first agency-wide training that did not separate participants by job title or type. Rather, staff—including service contractors/service agreement holders were trained in cross-cutting groups of about 20 (local and international staff and contractors were together, drivers and secretaries were in the same sessions with logistics and programme staff, managers were trained alongside those they managed, etc.). We received feedback that this brought teams together and demonstrated the knowledge and value of some staff (particularly drivers and other support staff) whose importance to the safety and security aspects of the work had not previously been as clearly and officially recognized. A consistent piece of feedback was that the training made “staff feel for the first time, that WFP is a family.”
- The programme was carried out with speed and unprecedented scale. Some 5,655 WFP staff and 250 other UN staff received two to three days of training in the core modules between February 1999 and June 2000. Some also received training in one or more additional specialized topics.
- The SAT included a session introducing the then new Abuse of Power and Harassment policy and procedures. This session invariably ran over the time allotted for it, prompted many private discussions with trainers, and many reports from field offices. In several cases, the reports resulted in investigations, and in at least one case of blatant abuse, a manager was fired. All this also contributed to WFP establishing new procedures for managing complaints.
- This was the first time that all WFP staff members were required by the Executive Director’s mandate to participate in a training programme. Participation was recorded in staff personnel files and was a prerequisite for some assignments and promotions.

Most importantly, the programme saved lives. We had feedback in at least two instances where staff credited the training with saving lives. In one case, a staff member involved in a helicopter crash in Mongolia reported that he survived only because the training had taught him how to “drop and roll” under fire and smoke. Using lessons from the fire safety module of their just-completed SAT training, WFP staff members in Mozambique were able to put out a serious fire that threatened the whole UN compound. The fire involved a couple of cars parked in the compound. The WFP staff’s actions prevented the fire from spreading and other cars from exploding.

Several staff members were involved in a hostage event. In one case, a staff person who was based at headquarters had protested having to go through the training. While on mission travel to Liberia, almost immediately after completing the required SAT, he and several others involved in the mission were taken hostage and held for several days. After their safe release, he wrote a passionate note about how important the training had been for him and those with him in dealing with their situation.

The SAT training also led to the Emergency Management Training, strengthened multiple aspects of safety, security, and competence at the field level, and spilled over – to varying degrees – to other agencies and their staff.

The last I heard WFP staff members are expected to complete an online security training and to successfully complete a related test. That was a few years ago, however, and I have not inquired lately about how, how well, and for whom security training is implemented at WFP now. I know, though, that some of the SAT Trainers and many of those who received the training remember the training clearly, credit it with helping them personally, and remember key lessons to this day. I also know that some other organisations, including at least a couple of other UN agencies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, some WFP field offices, and others improved their own security training after learning about or participating in the WFP SAT training of that era.

There are some excellent people (some still with WFP) who could tell this story from their perspective, beginning with Carole Still, who – as mentioned – was indispensable to making the SAT programme successful, and several other SAT Trainers. Others, like Arnold Vercken, who was so helpful and knowledgeable – a great partner – in the SAT work, are sadly no longer with us.

SAT had a profound effect on me that continues to help me even now, some 20 years later. Not only did I learn many of the safety and security lessons from SAT, I have used the SAT experience to help other organisations and individuals think about and invest in security training. I also suspect that the success of SAT played a role in my being tapped to set up WFP's first School Feeding Support Unit in 2000. I cherish the fact that SAT introduced me to so many wonderful people, many of whom have remained friends—one of them is in fact coming soon to visit me in Seattle.

Most of all, I am proud and touched by the number of lives saved or made safer or better because they were WFP staff and they experienced SAT.

## The Birth and Growth of FITTEST

Peter Casier

Every good story starts somewhere



From a reporter's point of view, the timing could not have been better.

It was early November 1998. Paul Harris, a journalist working for Reuters Alertnet, was interviewing the World Food Programme (WFP) Regional Information and Communications Technology (ICT) team in our Kampala office. We were going over the past years' achievements of establishing WFP's first radio-based email system and deploying WFP's first Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) network. Summarily, we were talking about WFP's first full-fledged regional technical support team.

I was just mentioning to the reporter how, a few weeks earlier, we floated a proposal to provide similar technical support to other WFP operations and WFP partners: to use the know-how acquired over the past years, the available equipment stocks and the trained staff, as a rapid intervention team to augment the local capacity of WFP and partners' operations worldwide. We suggested a new team called FITTEST: Fast IT and Telecoms Emergency and Support Team.

Right at that very moment, a call came in from Peter Scott-Bowden, "PSB," among friends and colleagues, who then headed ALITE, the WFP logistics fast response team in Rome. At that time, ALITE was the only emergency deployment team we had at WFP. PSB's message was short and clear: "Hurricane Mitch just hit Central America. Damage is extensive. We know about your proposal to start a fast intervention ICT team, so we want to try out the concept. Pack your bags and equipment. We want you on a plane to Nicaragua in 24 hours. If this intervention works, we can talk about institutionalizing a WFP technical intervention team. How did you call it again? Ah yes, FITTEST..."

A few weeks later, the Reuters journalist published his article, and we completed our first FITTEST – avant-la-lettre – intervention in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador—a rapid deployment mission that took stocks from the Great Lakes Region and headquarters, pulling in staff from Uganda, Rome, WFP standby partners and UNICEF—all on a simple cost-recovery basis. In retrospect, it looks like this mission provided the script for many FITTEST missions to follow.

### **The Birth of FITTEST**

A short fast-forward to mid December 1998. I had just flown back to Rome from the Hurricane Mitch deployment. I had not seen a shower in four days. I did not sleep for three days. A few minutes after I walked into WFP Headquarters, a call came in: Jean-Jacques Graisse, the Deputy Executive Director, was meeting the WFP Regional Directors, and he asked for a briefing on “FITTEST” as a concept, and a run-down on the recent Hurricane Mitch deployment as an example. I remember diving into the WFP bathroom to change into some fresh clothes and put on some deodorant.

It was at a time when “ICT” at WFP was often seen as a second or third level priority. Something to the effect of, “oh yeah, sure, let's have some of that too.” There were no regional ICT teams yet, let alone regional ICT stocks. There was no corporate technical training, no organisation-wide technical standards, or manuals, or standby rosters, or Emergency Response training. In short, ICT for WFP in those days was considered “an option” for all WFP operations, except the Great Lakes Region. With FITTEST, we offered to extend our services to other WFP regions, using a simple “cost recovery formula.”

I made my pitch to the Regional Directors and held my breath as I looked around the room, into the faces of the people I considered as “WFP Gods” at the time: the Regional Directors. There was silence for about 15 seconds. Then the Eastern Africa Regional Director banged the table with his fist and shouted: “This is a disgrace!”

I felt my body shrinking to the size of a smurf. “This is a disgrace.” He repeated. “How come you guys in Kampala can offer these services to Central America, while I run an operation in the Greater Horn, one hour flight from Kampala, and I am still in the technical Stone Age? I want to have what you have!” We were quick to tell him that this was exactly the purpose of FITTEST: to provide technical support—staffing, know-how, training, equipment etc., during emergencies; and in-between emergencies, provide augmentation trainings, assessments and institutional upgrade missions. “I am in, I want it!” Shouted the same Regional Director. “So am I.” Shouted another. “I want that too,” said another.

### **The Early Years**

There is a difference between “approving a project” and “funding a project,” and moreover, actually “running a project.” While FITTEST was approved as a

concept, it was up to us to convert “the idea” into a “valued project,” and a cost-effective one too. In the years to come, we always joked that FITTEST started with “two guys and a screwdriver.” And the truth was not very far from it.

We started FITTEST in early 1998 with one Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) seconded staff, one staff borrowed from headquarters, and an *ad hoc* deployable staff from the WFP Great Lakes Region. We ran on a small six-month “financial allowance” from headquarters to fund our fixed costs, but the actual expenditure (mission costs, equipment costs, etc.) had to run on a cost-recovery basis. Cost recovery was a pretty alien concept to WFP at the time. *How do you mean you want to charge me your staff travel cost and DSA?* Many WFP Country Directors asked me during the first FITTEST missions. *You are paid by WFP, just as we are, so why should I pay you?*

But we struggled through few early months of challenges until the next emergency. On Easter Day 1999, the call came to support the Kosovo emergency, and we deployed stocks and staff to Albania and Macedonia, supporting the re-entry into Kosovo right, while NATO planes were still bombing the country. Just a few months later, we deployed to East Timor.

The WFP Asia Bureau decided that they wanted to establish a permanent FITTEST base in their region, too. By the end of 1999 we had two FITTEST teams: one based in Kampala and another in Kosovo.

At that time, WFP recognized the potential crisis looming around Afghanistan and the Central Asia region, and we moved the Asia FITTEST team to Islamabad, assessing the technical readiness of WFP and other UN agencies just before 9/11. When the Twin Towers were hit, we were ready to take on our first major interagency deployment, supporting not just WFP, but all other UN agencies and WFP partners, taking the lead in what would be the first of many UN common deployments and the birth of the UN ICT cluster operations.

For WFP, the Afghanistan operation was a first on many levels: it was the first deployment on a UN system-wide level where WFP was the clear lead-agency for ICT. It was also the first deployment where, amongst other “firsts,” we received visibility at the highest UN echelons, while installing a GSM telephone system in Kabul for relief agencies and the new government just weeks after the Taliban was defeated.

Thereafter, things moved rapidly. Islamabad, right after 9/11, proved to be too volatile for our Asia-based FITTEST team. And with a team split between two bases in Kampala and Islamabad, it was clear we needed to combine both teams, with a more permanent infrastructure.

### **Dubai: Our First Home**

Just a few weeks after 9/11, we did an assessment around the region and found Dubai to be the most opportune location for a WFP emergency base and a

permanent WFP-worldwide intervention team. With the support of the FITTEST Godmother, Enrica Porcari, we moved contingency stocks and one staff to a makeshift location in Dubai. Our office at the time was nothing more than a warehouse extension from a Toyota garage. We had space for a small office, housing one desk, one telephone line and a 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> warehousing facility, to be the new FITTEST base.

I remember looking at that massive warehousing space, seeing our small technical stock in there, and thinking: "Oh dear, this will be a white elephant...We will never be able to fill this space."

But, as we merged the Africa based and Asia based FITTEST teams into one, and moved all stocks and staff to Dubai; and as preparations for the Iraq operations took off in full swing, our Dubai adhoc operations rapidly expanded with all technical staff - augmented with admin, finance, procurement, fundraising and regional advocacy staffing. This is how "WFP Dubai" was born. We expanded on a monthly basis. We grew from one administrative staff to a contingent of 30 permanent staff. We continued to give technical support to WFP Regional and Interagency Projects and prepared for the Iraq operation, which proved to be the turning point for FITTEST and the WFP Dubai operations.

### **Only in Dubai**

As the Iraq operation got in full swing with WFP (and FITTEST) taking the lead on the interagency ICT emergency deployment, we were also called upon for most of the regional procurement and logistics deployment. We no longer had a stock of twenty handheld radios; we now procured them by the thousands. Long gone was the time when we bought ten laptops, because we were now buying them by containers. We also procured armored vehicles, office equipment, massive generators, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) protection gear, etc. Our small team grew into a full-fledged, multipurpose fast deployment team.

Our offices, staff level and warehousing space grew too small, and we expanded on a monthly basis. Right at that time, WFP Dubai turned into a permanent support base, and a formally established WFP office. As we negotiated the WFP United Arab Emirates Country Agreement, we were called into a meeting with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Ruler of Dubai. He asked: "what do you need from us?" And we suggested the establishment of a permanent humanitarian intervention base in Dubai.

It only took two conversations, and the concept of "the Dubai Humanitarian City" was born: an administrative, procurement, logistics base for humanitarians around the world, with WFP as its clear leader. A new "humanitarian city," the base for thousands of relief workers—said and done. In less than six months, the Dubai Government built a base for all of us. Basically out of sand, with Gianluca Bruni as the project manager on the WFP side.

For FITTEST and its wider WFP Dubai base, this meant we moved the Dubai office, in less than two years, from an ad hoc space for one admin staff and just "a bit of stocks" to the largest humanitarian base in the world. By 2003, we had office space for over 150 staff. While two years before, we wondered how we would fill a 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> contingency stocks space, we were now leaping into managing 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> of warehousing space, including deep-freezers and cold stores, part of a 300,000 m<sup>2</sup> compound.

### **Turning an Idea into a Concept and a Permanent Service**

Meanwhile, FITTEST kept true to its basic concepts: a structural operational support team (in-between emergencies) and the fastest/most cost effective technical intervention team for humanitarian operations, by that time ran by Mats Persson, supported by WFP Rome's ICT team. We operated as if we were a commercial company within a non-profit organisation; which was a first on many levels. We did not get any fixed annual running cost allowance from WFP Headquarters. All operational costs were covered by a fixed overhead we charged for the services we provided.

This kept us on our toes: the better the services we provided the more "business" we got, and the lower our overhead. And, like a commercial company, we were driven by this principle: provide a quality product, in a competitive world, while ensuring continued services.

This was a "first" in the UN and the humanitarian world: an outfit, which would provide services and equipment, purely on a cost recovery basis, like a commercial company. A commercial company aims to increase profit margin, while we aimed to keep our overhead cost as low as possible - and we did - keeping our overhead costs less than 7 percent for WFP and less than 13 percent for interagency services.

### **As the Early years Passed**

As FITTEST grew into an established technical intervention and support base, and WFP Dubai - its home - grew into a worldwide logistics and regional fundraising base, our "business" expanded gradually. By the end of 2005, FITTEST and WFP Dubai were ran as a "zero corporate overhead" base for logistics and technical interventions for WFP and other humanitarian partners, running a "business" of over USD 70 million per year. Currently in its 20<sup>th</sup> year, FITTEST has undertaken over 1,500 missions in more than 130 countries.

### **FITTEST was a first**

FITTEST was a first, as a WFP-wide intervention and support team, but it was also a first as a system-wide service, running at a zero corporate overhead cost. FITTEST was at the birth of WFP's clear interagency lead on ICT services, which paved the way for its lead of the ICT emergency cluster.

FITTEST showed how one basic business area (ICT in this case) could be used as a showcase for other WFP functional areas, purely running on a cost recovery basis, like a commercial outfit in a non-profit environment.

FITTEST also showed how a field-based support team could collaborate with a headquarters-based service unit and other field operations to provide an on-call response service with a minimal overhead cost, and still uphold a high level of preparedness and knowledge.

FITTEST was also a product of an era when, within WFP, innovation, experimenting and “out of the blue” thoughts were taken and turned into system-wide approaches and examples; where people who had ideas far beyond “mainstream thoughts” turned the liberty and leeway they had into something unique.

### **The Power of the People Involved**

This is the history: history of dreams, of a vision, of an innovative team creating its identity and going through moments of glory and moments of sadness. Moreover, there are the people who created its vision and its spirit, and the people who, for years, were deployed, in a moment’s notice, to some of the most complex places on earth.

There are the people who, for months in a row, saw their children grow on the other side of a skype link, and the people that deployed in places infected with Ebola without really knowing what it was about and how to stay safe. The people who returned to Kosovo with refugees coming back home from Macedonia and Albania, the people who heard about the earthquake in Haiti at 2 a.m. and were on a plane by lunch time. The people who, legend says, prevented a new civil war in Afghanistan by installing a cellular phone system connecting opposing factions; those who deployed to the Philippines and stayed throughout Hurricane Irma. There are those who were in Baghdad on August 19, 2003 when the UN office was bombed, and those who immediately volunteered to go and relieve them. And those who did not want to leave emergencies because they were needed there. Those who never returned from Islamabad’s October 5, 2009 attack on WFP premises, and those who volunteered to go and provide support immediately after the attack.

Tsunamis, droughts, floods, wars, earthquakes...and team spirit. Because if one looks at WFP, it is relatively common—most of our people have fascinating stories to tell. But the FITTEST people have been through all of those emergencies for years. Before anything else, FITTEST was always about its people. Many have moved on—to the private sector, to logistics in other WFP operations; some went “back home” because they needed to, and others went to other roles in IT, and some even to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). But they remain FITTEST. As they say, “once FITTEST, forever FITTEST.” A special thanks to Gianluca Bruni & Mats Persson for their input to this article.

## **Delivering as One: Piloting the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in Mozambique**

**Georgia Shaver**



Georgia Shaver, WFP/Rein Skullerud

In the summer of 1996, I was reassigned to Mozambique as World Food Programme (WFP) Country Director, while at the same time serving as the first out-posted Regional Director for Southern Africa. In 1997, the United Nations (UN) introduced the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Mozambique UN Country Team was selected as one of the 18 pilot countries to construct the strategic medium term results framework (1998-2001) that described a collective vision and coherent response of the UN system to national development priorities and results on the basis of programming principles (delivering as one). Since I stayed in Mozambique for five years, I was also involved in the preparation of the second UNDAF (2002-2006).

UNDAF was innovative. In cooperation with governments, the UN system had to closely collaborate to draft the framework, synchronize agency programme and budget cycles, and identify common monitoring indicators. In July 1998, the Country Team was invited to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to present UNDAF and describe the process. As a result, WFP Mozambique's new country programme had to be completely aligned with UNDAF.

As Country Director, I had to provide leadership for WFP's participation in UNDAF, which included leading two thematic groups (Capacity Building and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation). I was fully onboard with the concept of UNDAF. I truly believed in the process, seeing opportunities for WFP to gain from the programmatic collaboration and cooperation as well as the advocacy and policy dialogue components of UNDAF. WFP was facing challenges from a government that no longer wanted food aid; therefore, UNDAF provided a timely platform for WFP and governments to think "out of the box" and re-define WFP's comparative advantage, which turned out to be a strategic focus on disaster mitigation and preparedness, in addition to response. WFP was now working with governments on policy development and capacity building in addition to traditional projects. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), WFP also helped governments draft a policy on food aid and a new national disaster policy (approved in 1999).

Key to the development of UNDAF was that each agency had to share programme objectives, location and resource information, build trust to allow agencies to speak on behalf of others and define a coherent programmatic response that was more than just a list of agency activities. In order to properly participate, WFP Mozambique had to take time to reflect on programme achievements and challenges. We did this in the form of a professionally carried out SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis of our activities, their objectives and results, calling upon donors, the UN and government ministries to tell us what worked or not, what we should and should not be or do, and what could be our comparative advantage.

The pre-process was just as innovative as the UNDAF process, and it provided a good example of learning and informing future programming. It was from this process that we defined our comparative advantage as mentioned above, strengthened our partnerships, and re-opened a positive, constructive dialogue with governments.

It is necessary to mention the country programme (1998-2001) as it required a shift to a people-centered approach, with Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) playing an important role in identifying those households at community level that required their capacity strengthened to harvest, control and conserve their soil and water resources, and raise their disaster mitigation and preparedness response. This strategy was implemented through an innovative activity called Food Fund—"a new, flexible mechanism to use food to support locally managed, demand-driven micro-development projects in food-insecure communities." The activities were focused on disaster mitigation, preparedness and response, providing WFP with the means to make a transition between development and emergency operations. Strategically, the activities were linked to the National Poverty Alleviation Strategy, the National Nutritional Action Plan, and other relevant sector programmes in education and rural infrastructure. The Fund faced problems and it did not survive. However, it demonstrated WFP's

ability to change, find creative solutions to recurring problems, focus on strengths and allow national priorities to determine best interventions.

The country programme also focused on building the capacity of the new National Disaster Management Institute (INGC), with activities including mapping, information and communication systems, alert and warning systems, and a plan of action defining the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, including a code of conduct. Emergency response targeting was strengthened, key legislation was reviewed to increase sensitivity to disaster management, and a legal framework was built in conjunction with civil society. WFP was now moving down a new road: it was stepping beyond its traditional role of delivering food aid and turning its experience, skills and technology into activities to capacitate government institutions, provide leadership in disaster management, including prevention and response, and give prominence to the role of civil society.

The next UNDAF (2002-2006) was rights-based and better harmonized, coherent and goal-oriented. And this time UN reform was front and center in the form of a common set of goals, objectives, core indicators, coordination modalities and a resource framework. The role of civil society was defined as an actor rather than a bystander. HIV/AIDs, gender equity and girls' access to educational opportunities were identified as common thrusts for development assistance across all agencies and programmes of the UN system.

Today, WFP programming has re-valued the role of capacity building, the importance of government leadership and partnership, and the need to define our comparative advantage, as well as the integral role of civil society in defining development priorities. WFP Mozambique understood the importance of these programming modalities when innovative UN reform processes pushed us to think differently, recognize and design opportunities for more effective engagement.

## Integrated Programming

Suresh Sharma



Food Convoy-Sri Lanka, WFP/Photolibrary

### Introduction

It is an undisputed fact that the World Food Programme (WFP) provides an environment for innovation. WFP generally encourages experiments with new ideas. Such an approach has led to improvements in various aspects of operations to make WFP one of the best UN organisations.

Innovation, however, is successful only if it is understood and accepted by more than a few members of the organisation. This is a story of such an innovation, which took almost 20 years to be adopted by the organisation.

### Country Programme in Sri Lanka

I joined the Sri Lanka team of WFP in the summer of 1998. Sri Lanka was engaged in an internal war. The Jaffna peninsula had just been liberated from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), but a large part of the mainland, known as Wanni, was still under the control of LTTE. WFP was providing food for relief, rehabilitation, and development. In addition, it was monitoring and reporting on the supply of food provided by the government in LTTE controlled areas.

WFP was assisting populations displaced from Jaffa, Wanni and Mannar in camps in Anuradhapura and Puttalam as a Protracted Relief Operation (PRO). WFP was also engaged in a Food for Work programme to rehabilitate irrigation tanks in

dry zones. There was a similar programme of rehabilitation of an irrigation system in liberated Jaffna where WFP was assisting. Further south, WFP was assisting with the rehabilitation of a population displaced from the Mahawali river irrigation project. There was an occasional emergency operation whenever there was a drought in the dry zone. These activities were carried out through two small development projects: a large PRO for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and a small Emergency Operation.

With the adoption of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) approach by the UN system, and the country programme approach under the WFP Food for Development policy, Sri Lanka was getting ready to develop a country programme. The Executive Board had already approved the Country Strategy Outline (CSO) in May 1998. The CSO had rightly identified *sustaining victims of the ethnic conflict* as one of the relief and rehabilitation activities within priority sectors for assistance.

We (Deputy Country Director Dominique Frankforte and I) drafted a country programme and submitted it to the Regional Bureau in Rome for presentation to the Programme Review Committee (PRC) in 1999. In the country programme, we outlined all the activities to be carried out in Sri Lanka, funded from all three programme categories—development, protracted relief, and emergency relief. In fact, we had included a matrix table that identified the target of support (in terms of beneficiaries and financial outlay) for each activity; i.e., relief for internally displaced population, infrastructure development in rehabilitation area, food-security development in normal area, assisting landless farmers for cultivating in settlement area, as well as nutrition education, funded by each of the three programme category. The idea was that, whatever the source of funding, the ultimate objective was to improve food and nutrition security among vulnerable population. Initially, there were some queries from the bureau, but we were able to explain. However, when the country programme was discussed at the PRC, the committee did not endorse the Integrated Country Programme for presentation to the Executive Board. The committee's view was that the country programme was concerned only with development resources, and should not include PRO and emergencies, which had different approval modality (The Executive Director had the full authority to approve a PRO up to a certain amount, and all emergency operations, either by herself or jointly with the Director General of FAO, if the value exceeded a certain amount). My interpretation of the decision of the PRC was that our proposed country programme was returning the Executive Director's authority to the Executive Board.

At that stage, under the guidance of the Regional Bureau, we decided to extend the time frame for existing development projects as well as PROs. That gave us some time to revise the draft country programme and the PRO proposal.

## **United Nations Development Assistance Framework**

The country team in Sri Lanka had started working on the newly focused UNDAF. Similar to the country programme process of WFP, UNDAF was based on a Country Strategy Note (CSN) prepared by the country team. The CSN had rightly highlighted relief and rehabilitation as the major work of the UN system during the internal conflict period (1983-2009). The UNCT, based on the argument and assistance financing of WFP, UNICEF, and UNHCR came to the conclusion that a UNDAF without a discussion of relief and rehabilitation would be incomplete. The UN Country Team also became aware that the other two country teams – Angola and Mozambique – were going for a similar approach (Both countries were recovering from internal conflict, and the recovery component of the UN system work was much larger than the development component). Therefore, together with Angola and Mozambique, Sri Lanka prepared one of the first integrated UNDAF in the UN system that contained components of development, relief and recovery activities. Of course, WFP team contributed significantly to this effort. (By this time, Dominique Frankforté had left for Kosovo and Hildegard Tuttinghof and Hakan Tongul had joined the WFP Country Team).

## **Revised Country Programme**

A new Country Strategy Outline was presented at the May 2001 session of the Executive Board (WFP/EB.2/2001/4/3). The CSO discussed the relief and recovery activities and indicated that development activities will complement relief activities. A country programme for Sri Lanka was presented to the Executive Board in October 2001 (WFP/EB.3/2001/8/3). The country programme document listed *providing emergency and humanitarian assistance to conflict areas and people, helping to restore the economic livelihood of the adversely affected persons* as number one activity, and referred to the separate Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation document presented to the Executive Board at the same session (WFP/EB.3/2001/9-B/1).

## **Epilogue**

There have been many innovations, changes, and improvements at WFP since that time. More recently, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals by the UN, and its link to WFP's Strategic Plan, restructuring of the financial framework of WFP in light of more cash-based transfers, and many other imperatives have led to the adoption of the Integrated Road Map (IRM). The Country Strategy Plan approach under the IRM guides the implementation of various activities—whether they are funded from development, protracted relief, or emergency relief stream (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1). The ultimate aim of all WFP activities is to improve the food and nutrition security of vulnerable populations. The seed of innovation for Integrated Country Programme sown two decades ago has come to fruition in the Integrated Road Map (IRM).

## The World Food Programme School Feeding

**Arlene Mitchell**



Arlene Mitchell, WFP/Michael Huggins

From the best we could glean from old records about 40 years after the fact, the World Food Programme (WFP) School Feeding activities started in 1963—very early in the agency’s history—with a programme to feed young women attending a boarding school for training nurses in Bolivia. The programme quickly expanded to other countries, and by the 1970s, it had become a core programme of WFP’s development portfolio. Donor support for school-feeding was strong through that period and into the early 1980s, but declined dramatically after the mid-1980s. By the 1990s, support had painfully dwindled to a low level.

I joined WFP in 1997. Most NGOs had given up on school-feeding by then and moved to other programme areas. WFP was struggling to keep school-feeding programmes alive. Loyal supporters of school nutrition programmes in the USA, the then Ambassador to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), George McGovern and his long-time US Senate colleague Bob Dole urged President Clinton and the US Congress to support school-feeding in food-deficit countries around the world.

On July 23, 2000, at a G8 Summit in Japan, President Clinton announced a commitment of USD 300 million for a Global Food for Education Initiative (FFEI). In anticipation that WFP would receive a significant portion of this new source of

support for school-feeding, WFP Executive Staff moved to set up a new School Feeding Support Unit (SFSU) in the WFP Policy Division in September 2000.

Only peripherally aware of the negotiations and deep into Security Awareness Training, management training, and other activities in my role as Chief of Career Development and Training, I was very surprised (and a lot of others were, too!) when I was asked to lead the new school-feeding unit.

An aside re how I found out that I was being considered for the job: I was talking with someone in the “inner circle” of decision-making, who described in some detail the criteria against which potential candidates were being measured, and that a decision was about to be made. “There are only five people in all of WFP that meet most or all of the criteria,” I was told. The person said there were a lot of back and forth among the Executive Staff. This person was fighting for one particular candidate to get the job but said it didn’t look like it would happen. They then named three more candidates, one after another, saying after each one that they were not likely to be selected. They stopped when they got to the fifth person. “I just can’t remember who it is,” I was told, “but they shouldn’t get it (the other candidate) deserves it more and will do a great job!” This “inner circle” person kept trying to remember who the fifth candidate was, getting more and more frustrated with themselves, going over the four names a couple of times, really searching for the fifth name. Then suddenly a very strange look passed over their face. “Oh my gosh, it’s you!” was the exclamation. No more than a couple of days later, I was asked to immediately move to Policy to be the chief of the new unit.

The SFSU was set up in September 2000. We were three: WFP staff member Eri Kudo, a consultant named Marcus Forte, and myself. A bit of help was accorded from the Policy Director’s office. Our first large task was to explain how WFP planned to proceed in an Information Note for the October 17, 2000 Executive Board (still available on WFP’s website, under Executive Board documents).

Things took off like a rocket from there. When the US Government opened its call for proposals, WFP submitted requests for 47 countries! On December 28, 2000, the US announced its approval to provide food, transport, and administrative costs totalling USD 292 million of the USD 300 million. WFP received notification on January 17, 2001 that it would receive resources for 23 countries—about 48 percent of the total. About 44 percent went to non-governmental organisations; 7 percent went to a government-to-government programme with the Dominican Republic. The 23 countries for which WFP received resources were: Bhutan, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Tajikistan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

In a subsequent move related to FFEI, the US Congress authorized the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme

to support children in food-deficit countries around the world in 2002. Though the current US Administration has proposed eliminating it, the McGovern-Dole Programme continues to date and has supported school-feeding for millions of children through grants to WFP and NGOs.

FFEI and the McGovern-Dole donations triggered a number of innovations during my tenure in School Feeding: activities being undertaken for the first time by WFP and/or which were at a scale not previously accomplished. It was a wild ride—the SFSU was extremely active, and the work was a joy. Country Offices seemed almost ecstatic for our help and ready to cooperate. There was room for creativity and some money to support it. The team was also dynamic and flexible. The exhilarating work continued throughout my four years in the unit and into the tenure of my friend and successor, Francisco Espejo, who took over as chief of the unit in early 2005.

### **Examples of Innovation:**

**Baseline Survey:** The Executive Director, Catherine Bertini, mandated that we conduct a baseline survey prior to using any of the new donations. The survey was unique in both size and speed. The template was tested in August 2001; training sessions were held in September, and the survey was implemented between October and December. Over 4,000 schools in the 23 countries were surveyed. The data was sent to SFSU for cleaning and analysis, and the initial results were reported in April 2002. This set the stage for WFP to be able to credibly report the impact of the FFEI contribution.

**Afternote:** Follow-up surveys were conducted for a couple of years before the decision was made in 2004, as I recall, to decentralize their management and implementation. Decentralization resulted in an inability to standardize and report across countries, a problem that seems to exist to this day.

**Global Survey:** Between May 2001 and April 2002, WFP gathered data regarding national school-feeding programmes and related information for 153 countries worldwide. To conduct the surveys, WFP recruited 69 “Survey and Advocacy Associates” – representing 44 nationalities – from around the world. Most were graduate students whose recruitment from universities around the world was coordinated by Michigan State University. The Associates visited more than 140 countries to conduct the surveys in person and completed an additional 13 surveys without visiting the countries involved. The survey results were compiled in a central database, which was available on WFP’s website, but has since been lost. When the surveys were completed, the Associates continued to undertake advocacy work for school-feeding.

**Afternote:** In addition to the survey paying off in terms of the knowledge gained about school meal programmes around the world, it has paid off handsomely in terms of human capital. As of this writing, I’ve lost track of most of the Associates, but I am aware of two former Associates who are now WFP

Country Directors, one who is a WFP Programme Officer. Another one works for CARE. Another did research at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), one attended some WFP Executive Board meetings as part of the Government of China delegation, one was working (for a while at least) in a Ministry of Foreign Affairs in one of the Scandinavian countries. Several are/were involved in academia: a Kenyan Professor of Nutrition at a Kenyan University, a Rwandan now at an Irish University, and a Dutch woman at Wageningen. It would be an interesting study to learn where they all are now and how the experience as Associates shaped their careers. Somewhere there are pre-and post-survey travel videos that were done with the Associates telling their personal stories—I recall their post-survey interviews being dramatically more “adult” and self-confident than their pre-survey presentations. Comparing those videos to how they represent themselves and the experience now would be super fascinating.

There have been subsequent attempts to conduct global surveys. The 2013 WFP publication, “The State of School Feeding Worldwide,” uses responses to a global survey conducted in 2012. A subsequent survey was reportedly conducted by WFP as an update to the 2012 survey, but the results were never analyzed or published. The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) is currently planning to conduct a Global Survey of School Meal Programmes in 2019, with the goal of repeating the survey every two to three years into the future.

**Monitoring Schools via Satellite:** The School Feeding Unit implemented the Argos project, which was a totally new approach to monitoring school-feeding activities. The unit was given approval to use the French and United States Governments’ Argos Satellite System (set up by these two governments approximately 20 years earlier to track environmental and weather phenomena worldwide). Participating governments approved use of Argos, and selected remote schools were equipped with simple and durable keypad devices, programmed with infographic question prompts. A trained person (or committee) at each school followed the prompts to report basic statistics on a monthly basis. The devices transmitted the data to the Argos satellites, which in turn downloaded it to the (already existing) Collecte Localisation Satellites (CLS), the main Argos “data collection centre” in France. CLS sorted the data by country, school, etc., and posted monthly reports electronically available to the respective national governments and WFP. (The data captured was very basic, e.g., numbers of boys and – separately – girls attending and receiving food, what food was delivered to the school, what children were fed, etc.) The WFP Commodity Tracking system reports could be cross-referenced with this data to spot anomalies and potential problems, allowing WFP and its partners to focus their monitoring visits to schools with specific issues. The system was piloted in 11 countries in 2002, then implemented in several countries between 2002 and 2005 and operated for some time thereafter.

**Afternote:** The system was expensive—we paid for the devices, their installation and the related training, and for transmissions and reports. It was controversial within WFP—especially at headquarters, but largely embraced by the schools, governments, and WFP staff in the countries where the Argos Project was implemented. Staff welcomed the help for monitoring schools in remote locations. One interesting observation was that teacher attendance seemed to dramatically improve where the devices were installed—as though they thought the devices were noting their absences! The WFP/headquarters issues went beyond cost and seemed to revolve around fear of what the devices might tell us regarding food diversions. Anyway, we were never able to really push Argos – nor any subsequent proposals to improve monitoring – to scale. Today we expect that such reporting could be – and perhaps is, in some countries – done much more cheaply via cell phone. At the time, however, cell phone coverage was virtually non-existent in most of the remote areas where WFP was delivering school food.

**New Foods:** Until about 2003, whenever WFP was asked by donors to consider new commodities or products, it considered them on a case-by-case basis. Global publicity regarding WFP's School Feeding operations brought an increase in proposals for WFP to try new products; however, this approach was no longer adequate. SPSU approached the United Nations University to establish and manage a group of experts on WFP's behalf – a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) – to review new food products proposed for WFP use. They were to advise WFP re product suitability vis-à-vis nutritional value, wholesomeness, food safety, shelf life, cooking options and issues, health implications, etc. Once the Advisory Group provided its advice, WFP could perform additional analysis on other suitability aspects such as cost, transport and storage, as appropriate, and decide whether to accept a donated food that had not been previously used in its programmes.

**Afternote:** As far as I know, WFP was still using some form of TAG for such purposes.

**De-worming:** Based on successful collaborative experiences in individual countries (especially in Nepal), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and WFP collaborated to design and deliver a multi-country model for de-worming school children. The first joint multi-country de-worming workshop was held in Uganda in 2002 for representatives from both the Ministries of Health and the Ministries of Education of seven Anglophone African countries; a parallel workshop for Francophone countries was implemented in 2003. The participating ministries' representatives were trained and given materials regarding how to implement de-worming programmes. They participated in an actual treatment of school children in a local school and drafted their own country-specific strategies for implementing de-worming. They then returned to their countries to consult and refine their plans. Once WHO and WFP approved their plans, they were eligible for funding to implement treatment programmes for the children in schools

assisted by WFP School Feeding activities. Most of the funding for the workshops and for the subsequent initial treatment was provided by Canada, through a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) grant to WFP. In its first year, the WFP-WHO programme treated about one million school children.

**Afternote:** It was hard to sustain funding for de-worming activities, but many countries were able to keep going after the initial support from Canada. Helped by the De-worm the World Initiative or other resources, some countries implemented large-scale school-based de-worming, and some are still doing so, with or without WFP involvement, with or without linking the treatments to school-feeding. I learned from my de-worming friends recently, though, that school-based de-worming activities have never achieved the high goals set out. This is a big disappointment, given that school-age kids are the main vector for intestinal parasites. They don't just spread the contamination, though; they also suffer greatly if infected.

**Phase Out Studies:** We undertook case studies of eight of some 22 countries that had had, but were no longer receiving, WFP support for school-feeding programmes. We also looked at Cape Verde, which – at the time – had planned to phase out, but the decision was reversed before it was completed. We conducted desk research on the topic as well and included information we were able to get regarding NGO experiences as well as WFP's. We wanted to know what had been most difficult for them in the transition, and how they were doing at the time of the study. What we learned helped to shape WFP's "Exit Strategies for School Feeding" policy, presented to WFP's Executive Board in February 2003. One learning that sticks out in my mind to this day is that several countries said they particularly struggled with how to procure food as they tried to manage programmes without WFP assistance.

**Afternote:** Countries continue to phase in and phase out of WFP support for their school-feeding programmes, as natural disasters and civil strife come and go; and as food security, economies, and capacities build and wane. Two major differences between then and now, however are: 1) the number of countries—particularly in Africa—who are feeding more of their own children and managing more of their own programmes (even if WFP and NGO programmes are still operating within their borders); and 2) WFP now has policies and programmes (such as those of the Brazil-based WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger) in place to help countries make the transition from donor-assisted to self-managed and funded programmes. Just some examples of African countries with large school-feeding programmes managed at least in significant part by the countries themselves are: Botswana, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, and Nigeria.

**HIV/AIDS:** WFP set up a new unit in the Policy division to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the widespread food insecurity and orphan crises it triggered, and we quickly saw (and heard from country offices) that school-

feeding could play a significant role in addressing both issues. The SFSU and HIV units collaborated in several ways: The two units conducted joint missions to Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal in August 2003 to identify ways of integrating HIV/AIDS education into school-feeding programmes, strengthening existing HIV/AIDS-related activities and starting new ones. In December 2003 we brought over 100 participants from country and regional offices in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Asia and from headquarters and liaison offices together for the first ever programming meeting on HIV/AIDS and school-feeding. We shared research and ideas, jointly funded country support activities, and advocated for needed resources and programmes.

**Afternote:** Although we were never able to take the joint measures as far as we wanted and was needed, the collaboration was powerful. School-feeding helped alleviate food insecurity for affected families, helped orphans go to school, and helped children in school to get the education they needed to make critical life decisions. As a World Bank colleague said at the time, "Education is the only vaccine against HIV/AIDS that we have at this time."

On a related note, we had a similar excellent working relationship with some of the Nutrition Unit staff and we did a lot together: including the De-worming Project work and setting up TAG. We were never able to do quite as much as we wanted to with Nutrition, either; partly due to the sentiment of many in the nutrition community that school-feeding didn't have enough value as a nutrition intervention. That sentiment still exists, although somewhat more muted. This is unfortunate, because one could argue that homegrown school-feeding might be one of the greatest opportunities ever for a joint agriculture-nutrition play of scale and intergenerational benefit.

**Partnerships:** We reached out to a number of NGOs to discuss collaboration regarding methodologies and learning strategies, and to UN agencies (including FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the UN University, WHO, and the World Bank) to collaborate on relevant aspects of education, health, nutrition, and sanitation in conjunction with school-feeding activities. Most responded positively. For example, UNICEF seconded two of its staff to the WFP SFSU between 2000 and 2005, and WHO worked closely with WFP to launch de-worming in conjunction with WFP's School Feeding programmes.

**Afternote:** Many of those partnerships have endured to date, some 17 years later. Of particular note are partnerships started in 2001 with FAO (the relationship got off to a rocky start, but it is much healthier now); the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF), which is where I currently work, and its annual Global Child Nutrition Forum, which brings together school-feeding leaders and partners from all over the world to share and learn; IFPRI (their studies linked to school-feeding continue to-date); the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), where the term "Home-Grown School Feeding

(HGSF)“ was coined and gained political support, with the Millennium Development Project’s Hunger Task Force and WFP; the World Bank, which at first partnered to study school-feeding and co-authored important reports such as “Rethinking School Feeding,” and now actually supports school-feeding as a safety net in some countries; and the Partnership for Child Development at Imperial College, which continues to partner with WFP, especially regarding school health and HGSF.

**Other Highlights:** We worked really hard and did a lot of other cool stuff. We worked on communications, issuing an annual School Feeding Report for several years, doing some videos, and interviews—even the New York Times covered us a couple of times. We helped to scale up school-feeding in Afghanistan when it became possible, and two of our (Global Survey) Associates worked for WFP there for some time after finishing their survey work. I went to Japan to raise funds for the programme in Afghanistan and visited their awesome school meal programmes (and even appeared on TV there).

I was on the Education and Gender Task Force for the Millennium Project, for which I travelled to Tajikistan and Ethiopia to look at barriers to education and females and to advocate for both. The Task Force recommendations include school-feeding. I also worked with NEPAD and the Hunger Task Force to get HGSF into the Hunger Task Force recommendations to make it a political priority in Africa.

We worked with the Government of Chile and the Global Child Nutrition Foundation to set up a Latin American School Feeding Network, La RAE, complete with legal status, a website, and a plan of activities. (It is still going today, though still leans heavily on WFP support).

We worked with Donor Relations to improve WFP proposals for funding. We worked with corporate partners, especially the logistics company TNT, with whom we set up a programme for some of their staff to work in school-related activities where WFP had school-feeding programmes, and with whom we walked around-the-globe in their Walk the World event. We pitched Unilever and visited one of their offices in Asia.

We visited Grameen Bank activities in Bangladesh (hosted by Mohammad Yunus just before he won the Nobel Prize) and Saudi Arabia with an influential Saudi to learn and to advocate for school-feeding. We continued to work with the US to maintain support from McGovern-Dole and political leaders.

And WFP School Feeding blossomed and thrived: the number of children receiving school meals through WFP doubled, from approximately 11 million to over 22 million in just those few years.

We had four glorious years full of excitement, opportunity, learning, hard work, and productivity. We had a lasting impact on a very large number of countries

and literally millions of people. But we also made many mistakes. One example is that we grew too large and probably undertook on too much. That made us a target for criticism, for struggles over staffing and budgets, and—eventually, for leadership to give in to pressures to “cut it down to size.” Another example is that there was too much stress on our employees, a couple of whom broke under the extreme pressure of the job, combined with family issues, and other events in their lives. I still carry great regret that I didn’t see it coming and didn’t do more to mitigate the work stress.

We also made it very hard for our successors—the School Feeding Unit did great things for at least a couple of years after I moved on and the cuts started. But it eventually was split up and moved around and down in stature within WFP.

The Centre of Excellence has helped to maintain a level of support, especially to country governments, and various individuals have made valiant efforts to support country offices and keep things moving. There is new hope because the current WFP Executive Director, David Beasley, has made it clear that he wants to raise the profile of WFP school-feeding to a high level once again.

**A Final Personal Note:** I grew up as one of five kids in what was pretty much a subsistence farming household—poor by US standards. I know that I would be nothing today if I had not received an education and several helping hands along the way. Because I went to school and on to college, I was able to thrive and have a wonderful career. This is what I want for other children.

Two of the most rewarding things I’ve ever done in my life are the Security Awareness Training we implemented across WFP during my first three years with WFP, and the work in the School Feeding Support Unit. In the former, I am convinced we saved a few lives and helped protect many others. In school-feeding, I found a lifelong passion that continues as this piece is written. All of us involved had a hand in giving food and opportunity to millions of kids via WFP programmes, and we were part of a movement that has helped millions more to receive school meals from their own governments and other sources. That movement continues. I am proud to be a part of it.

## The Origins of Homegrown School Feeding in West Africa

Trudy E. Bower



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The year was 1999. The World Food Programme (WFP) was emerging from a decade of transition to redefine its mission, structures, financing, governance and staffing profiles to align itself with the dramatic shift from development to relief, in response to a higher demand for WFP services in complex emergencies globally. The proportion of WFP resources allocated to development declined radically from 80 percent to 20 percent.

To justify and counter the open-ended nature of WFP's commitment to institutional feeding programmes, policies were enacted to allocate 90 percent of development resources to Low-Income Food-Deficit countries and to target the poorest, food insecure areas within those countries. Twenty-three "Other" countries had been "phased out," and ongoing school-feeding programmes, despite their success and popularity with recipient countries, were reduced in scope from national to targeted interventions.

In line with the new policies, WFP's School Feeding project in Cote d'Ivoire, one of the most stable and prosperous countries in Africa at the time, was re-evaluated and scheduled for a progressive handover process—first in the southern regions, followed by schools in the poorest, food-insecure northern

regions. Once this intention to handover was set in motion, WFP's role and influence as a development partner with the existing leadership of the Direction Nationale des Cantines Scolaires (National School Feeding Programme) was weakened, and therefore, working together to define a smooth process became problematic.

However, in 1999, the dynamic changed after our first joint WFP-Ministry of Education familiarization field trip with the Head of Training, Mme. Odette Loan, a sociologist with expertise in social mobilization and community-based development. In schools where WFP had already phased out, the government strategy had been to simply substitute WFP food rations with a daily rice ration. Mme. Loan, on her own initiative, had been piloting productive activities such as palm oil processing and agro-forestry plantations to support active women's groups in enhancing their income and food security while maintaining the nutritional components of daily school meals. The rice was complemented with diverse menus comprised of groundnut stew with *feuilles* (greens) and fruits, or dried fish with vegetables. Through these value-added agricultural transformation activities, women were enhancing their family income and food security as well.

A key success factor was the social mobilization component that encouraged communities to take ownership of their own development with the slogan, *non à la main tendue* (no to handout). Mme. Loan articulated the goal of giving Ivorian farmers a market for their production instead of importing commodities produced by farmers from developed countries. Her grand vision was to establish the primary school as an entry point for community development in the areas of education, food security & nutrition, environment, water & sanitation and income generation. The key component would be the sourcing of school meals locally, thereby supporting small farmer groups (most of whom were women) by ensuring reliable markets as well as reducing post-harvest losses and transport costs by moving the supply chain closer to the schools.

I had previous experience with the successful PAM-Suisse rice project in Madagascar where harvest surpluses generated by small farmer groups were transferred to the poorest populations through a network of social centers. In Cote d'Ivoire, the WFP managed, Japanese funded bilateral Projet Bas Fond (PBF) (lowland rice production) was already partnering with the Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development, and the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA), which could be leveraged to share experiences and synergies with the school-feeding programme. Experience had demonstrated to us in the field that school-feeding was an important catalyst for development, with spinoff effects in community development, and for promoting the literacy and empowerment of women as committee members, food producers, and cooks whose skills were already being leveraged for income generation in communities. The strategy was relevant, homegrown, and exactly what we, as WFP, should be

supporting to empower both government and beneficiaries to maintain the positive outcomes of school-feeding.

It was an "Aha" moment. I looked at Mme. Loan and said, "You should be the director." That was the beginning of our special partnership, based on trust, shared commitment and vision for the programme, which became the basis to redefine our roles and responsibilities and set a new course in the design and implementation of the strategy. With political support from the Regional Director, Paul Ares, who championed the new approach, Mme. Loan was elevated to the position of National Director of the school canteens programme, responsible for 40 staff in the ministry and government representatives at decentralized levels. She, in turn, valued WFP as a full and indispensable partner to whom she gave access to implement "capacity development" interventions that included the reformulation and computerization of systems and procedures for distribution plans, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), and logistics and advocacy campaigns. This marked the origins of the shift in WFP's role from project-related capacity building (i.e. training) to capacity development that eventually became Strategic Objective five of the WFP Strategic Plan.

This vision became the PIPCS, *Programme Intégré des Pérennisation des Cantines Scolaires* (Integrated Programme for Sustainable School Feeding), known generically as Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF), for which Mme. Loan was awarded the Friends of WFP (WFP-USA) Annual Award in 2003. HGSF became loosely defined as a school-feeding programme that was sourced by food produced and procured within the country.

Other critical partnerships were negotiated by the Regional Director with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) to provide technical support in the conceptualization of schools as business units with models to define the investments, type, and quantities of commodities required to source the nutritious menus. Synergies were established between school-feeding and the ongoing WFP-Japan bilateral *Projet Bas Fond* by targeting school communities where small farmer groups were producing rice and vegetables and testing strains of NERICA (New Rice for Africa). Mme. Loan negotiated intra-governmental agreements with the Minister of Agriculture and ANADER (*Agence Nationale pour le Développement Rurale*) to link their extension workers with community-based farmer groups.

Despite the period of unrest between 1999-2002, a national advocacy and fundraising campaign titled *Une Ecole, Une Cantine*, One School, One Canteen, was launched with support from the highest levels of the new socialist government that played a lead role in advocacy, coordination and resource mobilization.

Sadly, PIPCS lost momentum in October 2002 when the internal conflict escalated to a point where I, as head of a household with two dependents, along

with many of the development partners and their families, were evacuated and replaced by staff with humanitarian skills in a Phase 4 security situation. Many WFP communities that had been successfully phased out were re-enrolled as beneficiaries of emergency school-feeding.

However, despite these setbacks, the programme continued and provided valuable lessons in terms of education benefits, behavioural changes, the increase in local production adapted to local habits, strengthening of agricultural groups to produce, process and market their production, and the motivation of communities to take ownership of their own development (Source: Leslie Drake/PCD).

Meanwhile, Ghana emerged in 2000 as a model for the continent, with the free and fair election of President John A. Kufuor and the peaceful transition of power from former military leaders to civilian leaders who would govern by the rule of law. The new government determined that agriculture and the private sector would lead growth through trade in lieu of aid. Overnight, food aid was no longer relevant to government policies and strategies. After I was evacuated from Cote d'Ivoire to Ghana and accredited as country director in 2003, I was lectured by the Minister of Finance who said, "the best donor was the one who knew when it was time to leave."

It was a period of great change in international development frameworks and the Aid Harmonization Agenda. Within the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) framework, NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Action Plan (CAADP), Home Grown School Feeding (with its support to primary education, nutrition, and the marketing of small farmer production) became a key strategy to achieve the MDGs.

With the president's visibility and leadership on the continent, it suddenly became clear to me that this would be the entry point for WFP to align with the government's vision of agriculture and private sector led growth. To stay relevant in the political context, WFP had to move fast to define a new vision of cooperation with Ghana, first as a leader among the NEPAD HGSF pilot countries, and secondly, as a WFP Regional Procurement and Logistics hub (by lobbying headquarters to join the global network of UN Humanitarian Response Depots). To advocate for this cooperation, by rebranding WFP food aid as WFP food assistance, new interlocutors were identified: the Ministries of Trade, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, and most importantly, the Presidency.

At the time, WFP was implementing a traditional country programme – Food for Work in forestry, supplementary feeding & nutrition, and girl's education activities in the three northern regions – with a small national staff. The Direct Support Costs from the poorly funded country programme had been used to fund a P4 deputy instead of bolstering national recruitment and skills. A staff re-profiling was undertaken by the regional bureau to identify the new skills needed

and redundancies in existing posts, such as Shipping Officer. Many of the oldest staff took the WFP retirement package to make way for new recruitments. Team-building exercises were undertaken to align staff with the new vision and to clarify that the phasing out of certain activities did not mean that WFP-Ghana itself would leave. Still, it was uncertain as to whether we would succeed and raise the necessary funds to sustain the new investments.

President Kufuor championed the establishment of a Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) that was launched in 2006. However, given the government's position to demonstrate full ownership of the GSFP, WFP's role in the initial stages had to be discreet. My role, and WFP's stake in the GSFP, was further complicated by my balancing act with my Ghana-Government counterpart, in terms of maintaining positive relations while guarding my professional boundaries. To keep a low profile, we worked through our traditional partners in the Ministries of Health and Education, providing technical support in school-feeding management and sharing best practices in building community-based structures and capacities. Synergies were created between GSFP and the country programme by linking the continuum of nutrition/pre-school centers, school-feeding and girls education in targeted communities. Advancing the Cote d'Ivoire vision, the dynamic women's groups active within the existing activities were profiled by a newly-recruited UN Fellow and given technical support and small investments, such as mills, to carry out community-based milling and fortification in support of feeding centers and the communities at large.

In complement to GSFP's model of school meals using a decentralized network of caterers who received cash to procure and prepare food from local markets, I determined that WFP's entry point would be to model a national supply chain of fortified commodities – unavailable at the community level – to enhance nutritional outcomes. To do this, without having any capacity for either procurement or food technology, WFP-Ghana, with support from the WFP Grants Management Unit, undertook feasibility studies to train and strengthen local suppliers of palm oil, maize meal, iodized salt and fortified corn-soya blend to meet WFP tendering procedures and quality standards. After securing the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) grant for Universal Salt Iodization, we supported Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in southern Ghana to produce iodized salt that was re-bagged and marketed by women's groups in northern Ghana. After initiating a working group to successfully lobby WFP management for additional staff support to small country offices, I bolstered our international staff, comprised of the country director and one Junior Professional Officer (JPO), with the recruitment of a P3 food technologist to supervise and guide the new suppliers.

As a result, the Ghana Country Programme (2006-2011) was able to successfully institutionalize its partnership with GSFP by providing fortified rations in the three northern regions where GSFP was present. It was the first country

programme to plan food assistance with 100 percent local procurement (of which 75 percent would be fortified) to the two components of the school-feeding activity (on site feeding and take-home rations for girls). Although framed as a “handover” strategy in accord with government and donor demands, checks and balances would ensure a review of the timetable during the mid-term evaluation when the political climate did in fact change.

By 2008, I accompanied a Presidential Delegation comprised of the Director of GSFP, the Ministry of Education, six Ghana school children and their teachers to sing about school-feeding before the Executive Board in Rome. This was a highpoint in my career. The president was acknowledged for his commitment and leadership in Africa when he was named a WFP Ambassador for Hunger.

These early initiatives have since been integrated in the current Ghana Country Programme (2012-2018) with the goal to “enhance the capacity of government and communities to ensure sustainable food and nutrition security.” The nutritional support for vulnerable groups includes the model project, “WFP Enhanced Nutrition and Value Chains project (ENVAC), that links nutrition, agriculture and food-processing, using a market-based approach to provide specialized nutritious foods to vulnerable women and children in nutrition centers.”

The GSFP pilot provided valuable lessons in the need for targeting, community involvement and partnerships, in order to achieve the goals of providing cost-effective, nutritious meals through direct support to local farmers (Drake/PCD). WFP’s institutional and technical support to GSFP continues to improve performance and impact with a focus on:

1. Support for development of national policy on school-feeding
2. Demonstration of different nutritionally balanced, cost-effective menus
3. Improved needs-based targeting
4. Linking school caterers to smallholder farmers

The early experiences in West Africa were the impetus to identify and disseminate field-based initiatives in homegrown school-feeding. WFP Country Offices played a critical role as advocates of these innovative approaches, identifying and supporting champions within the government, providing targeted capacity development and negotiating new partnerships with non-traditional stakeholders among the UN, NGOs, the private sector and academia to bridge gaps in expertise and ensure ownership and sustainability. Challenges were identified and shared at the outset to guide future policy and project design with:

- Institutional Framework
- Legal Framework
- Coordination mechanisms
- Partnerships

- Targeting criteria
- Costs and scalability
- Funding mechanisms
- Food quality and safety
- Linkage with small farmer production vs. markets
- Monitoring & Evaluation

Today, WFP supports (directly or indirectly) 61.4 million school children in 69 countries, building the capacity of 60 governments in national school programmes, serving 45 million children. In 46 countries, school meals are linked to smallholder farmer production.

WFP/Ghana has realized our vision to become a regional procurement hub for the West African region, benefitting “agriculture and private-sector led growth” as the value of procurement increased from zero in 2003 to USD 20 million by 2014. The United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) was commissioned and constructed in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served as the frontline response to the Ebola crisis among others.

## Fund from Nothing: Creation of the Emerging Donors Matching Fund

Suresh Sharma



WFP Food Beneficiary-Ethiopia, WFP/Michael Tewelde

### Background

The World Food Programme (WFP) Financial Policy Framework (formerly known as Resources and Long-term Financing Policies (1995)) is based on Full Cost Recovery. The core of this policy is that the resources that donors contribute to WFP are for direct benefit to beneficiaries, and thus include all costs associated with the delivery of services, plus a small portion for Indirect Support Costs (ISC) for programme support and administration.

The transparency under the Full Cost Recovery policy provided sustained growth and stability to WFP for over 20 years. This policy was a change from the former policy, where in-kind commodities provided by certain donors were managed with the support of cash contributions provided by other donors. Under the new policy, donors were expected to provide the cash required to manage their in-kind contributions. At the same time, cash contributions provided by other donors were apportioned into contributions for commodities and other cash costs.

The downside of the new policy was that WFP had difficulty managing in-kind contributions that were not accompanied by the cash required to manage them. In the late 1990s, many emerging economies had good harvests and were eager

to provide commodity contributions, but were however unable to provide the necessary supporting cash contributions. WFP was scrapping for cash, approaching donors for the “matching” cash required, using “twinning” to give credit to both sets of donors for programme delivery, and using undesignated funds received from private donors for this purpose. The organisation was searching for a mechanism to generate and apply “matching funds” to support contributions from emerging donors.

### **Fund Creation**

In the year 2000, WFP had received a large donation to purchase commodities and implement a programme. The total contribution was about USD 169 million, of which USD 104 million was for commodities and USD 65 million for associated costs. WFP negotiated for the purchase of rice from a vendor in the donor’s country while at the same time entering into another agreement to obtain a long-term loan equivalent to the purchase price from a financial institution linked to the vendor. The loan was for 30 years—with a ten-year grace period and a low interest rate for 20 years. (The period covered is 2001 - 2030).

WFP used to put its surplus funds in a fixed deposit account through the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), who provided this service to WFP until 2000. Normally, the cash contribution received for the purchase of commodities would also be placed in a fixed deposit account. However, WFP had just decided to engage external fund managers to invest surplus funds in fixed income securities. Therefore, the WFP finance team at the time (I was Director of Finance, Jessie Mabutas was Assistant Executive Director, and Remy Dungca was Chief of Treasury) explored options other than fixed deposit or fixed income accounts to place this unique surplus. We wanted to invest in a way that could permit us to withdraw the annual instalment required to pay back the principal and applicable interest.

Dungca identified a product through one of the fund managers WFP had engaged. The product was Treasury STRIPS (Separate Trading of Registered Interest and Principal of Securities). We found STRIPS quite useful for our purpose—we paid about USD 65 million to purchase STRIPS that would mature in instalments that met the repayment of a loan of USD 104 million and interest over the next 30 years. The difference between USD 104 million (the fund WFP was holding for the commodities) and USD 65 million (investment in STRIPS to meet full obligations) became the seed money for an Emerging Donors Matching Fund of USD 39 million.

### **Innovation**

The Innovation in this context was the use of a financial instrument to manage resources that generated a fund of about USD 39 million. The treasury team was able to search for and use a financial instrument tool to obtain the interest for the whole period in a lump sum at the very beginning of the investment period. A fund of USD 39 million was created from the transaction, which only an

innovative mindset could produce. The Emerging Donors Matching Fund would probably not have been created if it had not been for the arrangement to invest in STRIPS.

### **Epilogue**

The USD 39 million of the EDMF was invested in other instruments. The initial framework for the operation of the Emerging Donors Matching Fund had a ceiling of up to USD 4 million expenditure a year, and up to USD 1 million a year in matching funds for commodities contribution from each donor. Since full utilization according to this framework would have exhausted the fund in a little over ten years, it was assumed that funds from other sources would be added if necessary.

While the relevance of “matching” may have diminished with the evolution of cash-based transfers and the reduction of in-kind only contributions from emerging donors, the nature of the fund is that it may be equally applicable to the implementation of the new Integrated Road Map (IRM).

# **Post 2002**

## Cash for Food: Supporting Local Economies and Offering Beneficiaries a Sense of Dignity

Josette Sheeran



Josette Sheeran, WFP/Pablo Recalde

I became a World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director at a time of global backlash against food aid because of its tendency to produce a few negative, unintended consequences. One of those negative consequences was that imported food could swamp local markets. In a situation where livelihoods have been suspended by war or natural disaster, people get hungry if they don't have cash, even if there is abundant food at the market. In such situations, food aid arrives and makes markets weaker, dragging down the ability of food growers and sellers to sell their wares. This disruption of local markets didn't happen in all cases, but in those situations where there was abundant food, lots of people just didn't have the money to buy it, so we had to address the challenge.

A second criticism was that sometimes food aid arrived as donations from donor countries and we mismatched food and populations. Stories such as cheese going to a population that had never had cheese before or canned fish going to a population that didn't eat that kind of fish were easily spread. Again, this didn't occur in most cases, but it drew attention whenever it happened. All this led to an effort at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to try to include a ban on food aid in WTO conventions. A number of countries also tried to discourage food aid.

In addition to the other two, there was a third complaint that came from the developing world. That is that food aid was a temporary fix; it didn't fix long-term food dependence, although WFP was historically innovative in trying to use programmes like Food for Work to reduce dependence. Many people still thought of food aid as a Band-Aid or an ambulance. So when I came in, I wanted to rebuild support for the work that WFP was doing, and I started by asking a really core question: is our mandate about a particular methodology or getting food into the hands of hungry people who would die if they did not receive intervention from an entity like WFP? We agreed that it was more about the latter and that we should create a toolbox of different ways to address the need for food. We knew that not every tool would work in every place. We concluded that a key tool to be added was getting cash or vouchers to people so they could purchase food from local markets.

I focused on developing a new kind of relationship with food markets. This is how we began to develop a cash and voucher tool for populations where food was present. A complex area was how to put adequate controls on those systems, because this was not something we knew how to do or frankly even the UN knew how to do. A major concern was how to control the movement of cash to recipient groups and monitor it, making sure that it reached them. We had a number of test cases in Mozambique, Uganda, Haiti, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Myanmar during Cyclone Nargis, when there was food but people had lost their livelihoods. We used a variety of tools from cell phones to vouchers and food credit cards—a swipe card.

We began innovating on a small scale and eventually made a big partnership agreement with MasterCard. Nancy Roman, who was head of partnerships, helped pioneer the relationship with MasterCard who built the back-end control system because that's what they know how to do—move cash and credit. We also brought new expertise like Pedro Guazo from the Mexican Government who had helped run a cash transfer system. It required changing everything— from how we procured and delivered, supply chain, control systems, to audits and financial structures. These are now running through the WFP system. Earlier, we entered a partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Syria, under the current UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who was head of UNHCR at the time, that really transformed the lives of the beneficiaries we found, in the sense that we were previously resented in the Syrian community because we didn't really give back to the economy. WFP was giving people boxes of food, but when they later received vouchers, they were going to stores and shops, and that developed a different dynamic. I remember going to Syria and learning that the recipients loved it. They loved the fact that even though their lives were miserable because they had lost everything, they were now able to pick what kind of tea they wanted. Even though we were only able to give them choices for something like five or six different items, they could choose if they wanted yogurt or milk; they could choose the kind of cheese they wanted; they could choose what kind of flour to buy, and they appreciated

this very much. I believe it offered people a sense of dignity, which was one of the benefits that we hadn't fully anticipated.



WFP Food Assistance Card, WFP/Saikat Mojumder

Dignity is very important to people. Even though on the West Bank they were restricted to eleven items — all very healthy — what was dignifying was the sense of being able to go to the shop and be a part of the local economy. It certainly made a difference in the local economy. I visited shops on the West Bank where business had quadrupled just because of our vouchers. In some very poor areas, merchants had to hire more people. Even dairy farmers were happy with us. We became famous in the area for inducing new demands for local produce. It also helped create fewer beneficiaries, because when a local economy has momentum, everyone benefits. When WFP comes in with a major intervention, like what we did after the earthquake in Haiti, and all of a sudden people have vouchers to buy food, supply chains are reactivated very quickly.

WFP is one of the greatest humanitarian organisations on earth. It has the bravest and most courageous people. Many of its employees risk their lives on a daily basis to get food to hungry children and those in need around the world. They work on the frontlines of trouble all over the world. When they are faced with a challenge in a drought or flood, in war or any other unfortunate condition, their objective remains to obtain food from somewhere in the world and take it to those caught up in these situations. They often have very little control over where we source the food and how we get it there. It could be in trucks, on barges, or on the back of a buffalo, WFP always finds the most functional way to move food even in the most difficult places.

The Cash for Food programme was a very difficult change for WFP, because the transportation of food through difficult terrains to hungry people was our skillset. We weren't an organisation that knew how to move and protect cash in dangerous areas. Our expertise was really to move food through flying bullets and the like, and we did it with a history of great courage. So I think this produced a real need for innovation and change, in terms of bringing a new skillset to WFP—a whole new area of expertise. It was a challenge, sometimes even painful, in virtually every part of the organisation. Certainly, for our financial system, this was a new kind of risk that we didn't have experience managing. We had to bring in people like Pedro Guazo and Gina Casar, who had experience doing this kind of work in other situations. It changed the lives of our very brave truck drivers and logistics teams who were not used to distributing cards and telling people how to download food on their cell phones.

All of us go through these challenges everyday with our children teaching us how to use technology in a way, but this was one of the biggest humanitarian organisations in world needing to develop new skillset and mindset. This put WFP ahead of the curve in terms of the kinds of innovations compelled by technology in the world that businesses had adapted to earlier, but the humanitarian world had not yet adopted. It really enabled us to prove that we can have several tools in our toolbox, with an understanding that not one tool fits every situation. Cash isn't the magic answer to everything, but it is an important tool to have for the right situation. At the same time, we still honour and love our truck drivers and logistics leaders. I think at the end of the process there was a lot of respect for the different types of tools and how they could be employed together.

It was also hard and it affected the lives of our Board very much, because we were talking about ideas that were not that familiar to the UN or the ambassadors who sat on our Board. This is where the World Bank, African Development Bank, and others became our big partners in explaining the programme. So it developed through partnerships, and we opened a whole new world to partners who initially only saw us as logistics managers and not as innovators. This transformed the image of WFP. And it also transformed the global coalition that was organized to defeat food aid. I think we brought virtually everyone on board and that effort died at WTO and other places, because we were able to build confidence that we were becoming much more skilled at looking at what the appropriate innovation was for the appropriate challenge.

Finally, I will take this opportunity to quickly mention another innovation that transformed WFP and the world—that was the knowledge that food must be viewed as essentially linked to nutrition. I wrote the lead piece for the Lancet series on the fact that, if children in the first 1000 days of life do not have adequate nutrition, their brains and bodies will not recover. This was not something that was known to the world, and it was not a WFP skillset to

prioritize appropriate nutrition for that age group in our rations and have tools to enhance the nutritional content of our food. This revolution spread throughout WFP and the world, as all began to recognize the need for interventions in the first 1000 days.

Today food aid is not viewed as taking food to places and disrupting markets. WFP is now viewed as an innovative organisation that is not afraid to figure out how to do things better. All these innovations have changed the way we do business. The bottom line is that I am not interested in innovation for innovation's sake. Innovation should help save lives in the most effective way and that is what drove everything I pursued in that area. For us at WFP, the lack of best tools does not equate to loss of profit; it means loss of lives. Our aim is not to be out there with fancy new tools to prove that we are cool; we want to be out there with efficient tools that allow us to reach more people effectively.

## Building an Innovations Lab and Encouraging Ideas

### Ertharin Cousin



Ertharin Cousin, WFP/Marco Frattini

I was the World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director during a very particular time, and so I could name quite a few innovations. However, I think a key innovation during my time was creating the Innovations Lab. I believe the team at WFP was one of the most creative groups of people I have ever worked with in my career. What I found as I travelled across different areas of service was that our teams were always finding new ways to solve operational problems, and so, what I wanted to do was to have the entire organisation benefit from the creativity and innovative ideas of other members. So we built an Innovations Lab in Munich, Germany, that gave space and provided opportunities for anyone who presented an idea. If the idea proved feasible, there was money to pilot it. This gave us an opportunity to pilot ideas, and we could offset those that didn't work without costing the country office any money. We were able to expand on ideas that succeeded and build them into the organisation.

A good example, of course, is the app that was created to raise funds for school meals. That app (ShareTheMeal) has raised millions of dollars from small donations across the world and helped support school meals in a variety of countries. While I was at WFP, we also started to pilot Blockchain in refugee camps as an ideal beneficiary-tracking mechanism, and it worked so successfully in one camp in Jordan, that they are now looking to expand it to other camps. Hopefully, it may become one of the tools that are used in the organisation in

the future. The Innovations Lab was a way for us to identify new ideas and test them for potential use in the field.

One of the exciting non-technical innovations was increasing the amount of produce and fresh foods that were available. Historically, WFP has always provided commodities - dry commodities - but there is recognition that we are now serving more people longer, and we need to ensure that particularly children and pregnant and lactating women have access to a more diverse diet. And so, as part of our programmes, we are working with local communities to purchase produce that can be distributed to beneficiaries. This approach started when we moved from food aid to food assistance. Expanding that programme gave people access to more cash that they could use to buy fresh produce. So using both the cash tool and voucher tool, as well as our traditional food aid distribution systems, to provide people with a more diverse diet in what we normally call the traditional WFP basket, is a significant innovation in the field.

The Innovations Lab is always looking for ways for WFP to be more efficient and more effective, for us to streamline our processes, particularly our distribution processes and beneficiary identification processes. All the tools that have been developed in the Innovations Lab help WFP operate better in the field. For example, the expansion of the WFP basket significantly impacts the ability to provide nutritious food to people who depend on WFP as their only source for accessing food. When we are feeding more people for a longer time, the emergency meal that we provide in the traditional WFP basket that meets emergency calorie needs does not necessarily meet longer-term nutritional needs. As a result, there has been more focus on the expansion of that basket to provide nutritious foods as well as basic commodities, to help ensure that not only are we filling the stomachs of those who are dependent on us, but that we are also giving them the nutrition they need. This helps WFP address the challenges of malnutrition particularly among children, pregnant, and lactating women.

I think every Executive Director who has ever led WFP continues the work of making the organisation evolve. I have only given you a very few examples of innovations. WFP is respected throughout the entire global community because it continues to evolve to meet the needs of those it serves, first and foremost, to the best of its capacity, by becoming ever more efficient at how it performs—which is the requirement that donors expect of the organisation as it continues to grow in size. Whether it is the Innovations Lab or Blockchain, or some of the financial changes that we made in the organisation that allowed us to purchase and move food faster, these tools ensure that the organisation continues to meet the expectations of its stakeholders.

All these innovations will continue to make WFP a better organisation. It is an incredible time of change in the world because of how technology is changing and how we operate in our everyday lives. The changes that were driven by our

Innovations Lab, IT and Financial teams – using technology to better streamline our systems, our change to using biometrics to support the identification of beneficiaries, moving beyond paper to biometric IDs, fingerprints and eye-scans, and building a system to track our beneficiaries by individual identifiers across the entire organisation—will continue to evolve. They have all made WFP a stronger and more effective organisation.

I am hoping WFP will continue to support good ideas, no matter where they come from inside the organisation, and to provide space for those ideas to be piloted. This is the only way we can ensure that we are capturing the best ideas across the entire organisation. I am thinking of the young people who created the fundraising app I talked about. They came to me because they intended to leave WFP to go out and build the app they had designed. I saw the potential it could have for our organisation, so rather than encouraging them to go out and find resources for it, we found money inside the organisation to build the app. This was, in fact, the basis for how the Innovations Lab started. So the best way to encourage continuous innovation is by embracing it, and giving space for new ideas and using the Innovations Lab and other tools within the organisation to pilot the ideas that could potentially work, and scale up those that do. There should be no harm in failure. We should have an environment where things can fail fast with minimal financial, technical, or time loss. We should celebrate successful innovations as well as ideas that don't necessarily fare well.

## ShareTheMeal

**Sebastian Stricker**



Lesotho, WFP/Tang Shizeng

I joined the World Food Programme (WFP) in May 2011, working as a policy officer exploring global strategic issues and policy trends, as well as serving as a project manager for nutrition and HIV.

During my time at WFP, I was confronted with the astonishing fact that it costs only USD 0.50 to feed one child for a day. In Rome, New York or Berlin one cannot even buy a bottle of water for this amount. At the same time, the number of smartphone users was continuously rising and would soon surpass 2 billion.

My colleague Bernhard Kowatsch and I started thinking about possible ways to bring these two groups – children in need and smartphone users – together to develop a crowdfunding solution to hunger.

In 2014, Bernhard and I took a sabbatical and started further developing the idea of ShareTheMeal, which would later become WFP's first mobile fundraising and awareness-raising app.

ShareTheMeal is a crowdfunding app designed to give every person the opportunity to help end hunger. It allows people to do good, whenever they want, wherever they are, by simply using their smartphone. With one tap, users can "share their meals" with children in need and each donation of just USD 0.50 enables WFP to feed one child for a day.

To realise ShareTheMeal and transform it from an idea to a working app, Bernhard and I brought together a small team of people from diverse backgrounds, including management consulting, start-ups, public relations, finance and software development—most of whom initially worked on a pro-bono basis. We spent nearly a year designing, testing and building a prototype of the smartphone application, planning for the launch, and rallying media and partner support.

From the very beginning, we – our small but enthusiastic team, our supporters, and senior management at WFP – believed that ShareTheMeal could create a community of people around the world, who believe that Zero Hunger is possible in our lifetime and want to help make it happen.

After a year of development, we launched a successful pilot of the ShareTheMeal app in Germany, Austria and Switzerland in June 2015. More than 120,000 people downloaded the app and provided more than 1.8 million school meals to children in Lesotho, which was the app’s first fundraising target.

In November 2015, we took ShareTheMeal global. The app became available to users around the world and was featured in international app stores. Our first global campaign raised funds to give school meals to 20,000 Syrian refugee children living in the Zaatari camp in Jordan for one year.

Through various new fundraising campaigns, upgrades and new features, ShareTheMeal continues to innovate, grow and gain new users worldwide. In August 2017, we launched a new “Camera Giving” feature, which allowed users to take a photo of their food, place a #ShareTheMeal filter on it and donate to feed a hungry child, as well as share to social media directly from the app. Camera Giving engages Millennials and builds on the trend of food photography on social media networks. In February 2018, the team launched “The Table,” which connects monthly givers with the family they are supporting through personalised updates and exclusive stories. Using data from WFP’s beneficiary data management platform, SCOPE, monthly givers learn when a family has purchased food thanks to their donation. By fundraising for some of WFP’s most critical operations, including Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Bangladesh, users will be directly helping the most vulnerable families worldwide. They will also benefit from additional transparency, an important expectation from millennial donors.

Since it was launched, ShareTheMeal has received phenomenal support and achieved numerous milestones, which have made all of us – both former and current team members – extremely proud. As of May 2018, more than one million users have raised over USD 11.5 million by sharing nearly 23 million meals with children in need.

With my next project, Share, a buy-one-give-one startup, I continue to develop the original idea. I believe that our generation wants to do good and all we need is to create easy, sustainable ways for them to do so!



## Innovation Accelerator: Harnessing the Power of Innovation to End Hunger

**Mario Merino**



Mario Merino (Left)

I joined the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2015, a year beset by crisis. From Syria to Ebola – the largest global public health emergency in recent history – WFP was faced with growing need and uniquely challenging operating conditions. With some 800 million people worldwide facing food insecurity, the need to do more was greater than ever.

From last mile logistics to innovative financing and the recent shift towards cash-based transfers, WFP has long stood at the forefront of efforts to develop new tools and approaches to end hunger. Moreover, unprecedented advances in digital innovation such as mobile technology, Artificial Intelligence, big data and Blockchain offer huge opportunity to make a difference to the way we serve vulnerable people across the world.

In an effort to nurture innovative thinking, WFP set out to create an in-house “Innovation Accelerator” based on best practices from the world of startups, the corporate sector, and leading social entrepreneurs in 2015. The creation of the Innovation Accelerator was a natural next step for an organisation with a rich history in innovation.

I had the honour of joining the Innovation Accelerator’s small, but growing team, in mid-2015. With the majority of my career spent in the consulting

industry, the opportunity to shape the future of innovation at the world's largest humanitarian agency was very attractive to me. With generous support from the German Government, the Innovation Accelerator was designed to help WFP identify and nurture the most innovative ideas, and to turn them into high impact, scalable opportunities.

Modelled on best-in-class examples from the private sector, the Innovation Accelerator offers a dedicated space and risk-free environment, access to State of the Art innovation methodologies and external networks to test, develop and take innovations to scale. It is a place where the organisation – together with a broad network of entrepreneurs, colleagues and private and public partners – can continue to explore what works (and what doesn't) in the quest for Zero Hunger.

Through the Innovation Accelerator's Sprint Programme, teams can receive up to USD 100,000 in funding, technological, design and project management support, and a safe space to reach proof of concept and develop prototypes ready for implementation. Over the course of an intensive three to six month sprint, innovators receive unparalleled access to WFP's global network of partners, resources and a best-in-class support structure. Innovations supported include mobile apps that connect isolated smallholder farmers to local markets and Blockchain projects that make cash transfers faster, cheaper and more effective.



Mario Merino/Innovation Accelerator Team

Through bootcamps, the Accelerator seeks to bring the latest techniques, analysis and methodologies to the table. Human Centered Design (HCD) is the

backbone of Innovation Accelerator. HCD is a creative approach to problem solving that starts with understanding the needs of the people we serve and ends with tailor-made solutions that truly suit their needs. By more precisely understanding the challenges faced at an operational level, WFP’s innovation teams are able to build solutions tailored to the needs of the people we serve.

HCD is complemented by a modern approach to building high impact services and products known as “lean start-up,” which favours experimentation over-elaborate planning; customer feedback over intuition; and iterative design over traditional big design upfront development. Although the methodology is just a few years old, its concepts such as “minimum viable product” have quickly taken root in the startup world. When establishing the Innovation Accelerator, it was always clear to us that solutions that contribute to a world with Zero Hunger must withstand the test of lean start-up.

**Innovation Accelerator Key Achievements (2015-2018)**

30+ innovation projects supported
7 scale-up projects forecasted to reach 1 million people in 2018
USD 28 million raised for projects now in scale-up phase
Listed as one of FastCompany’s “10 Most Innovative Companies – Food 2017”
More than 1,000 applications to the Accelerator received to date

I was very proud to help WFP establish the foundations of the Accelerator’s working model, including Bootcamps and the Sprint Programme. With these models still forming the basis of operations, the Innovation Accelerator has undergone a process of rapid growth since 2015. In that short timeframe, Accelerator has supported more than 30 projects around the world with seven innovations set to scale up in 2018 and beyond. Taken together, the Accelerator’s portfolio of early stage and scale-up projects has already improved the lives of more than 144,000 people. These projects have the potential to impact millions more people over the coming years.

It seems clear to me that WFP is uniquely situated to drive the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development well beyond the second goal of Zero Hunger. Its extensive operational reach, entrepreneurial ethos and ability to engage with the best companies and brightest minds can transform the lives of those furthest behind. The Accelerator is similarly unique; by taking the best of the private sector, academia and other external partners, it offers a route for bright ideas

and technologies that might not have otherwise survived the rough and tumble of daily business. It's my hope that WFP, donors, partners and entrepreneurs alike can continue to support and utilize the Accelerator to its full potential.

Finally, I would like to share a selection of the Innovation Accelerator's most successful innovation projects. From Blockchain to hydroponics, they highlight a broad approach to innovation—from digital transformation to digital skills training for refugees affected by war.

### Featured Innovations Supported by the Accelerator:

#### **Building Blocks**

WFP is deploying Blockchain technology to make cash transfers faster, cheaper and more secure. Blockchain is a distributed ledger used as a trusted way to track the ownership of assets without a central authority, speeding up transactions while lowering the chance of fraud or data mismanagement. Crucially, its peer-to-peer nature removes the need for verification from intermediaries such as banks or other institutions.

Less than 12 months after conducting a pilot with 10,000 refugees, WFP's "Building Blocks" project expanded to cover 100,000 refugees living in camps in Jordan in January 2018. The use of Blockchain technologies gives WFP a full, in-house record of every transaction that occurs at the retailer, ensuring greater security and privacy for the refugees; it also allows for improved reconciliation and significant reduction of third party costs.

#### **Teach for Food**

Tech for Food (T4F) is a unique programme that puts employment opportunities in the global digital economy within reach of young adults affected by the war in Syria. Through digital training courses, the project provides technical skills (such as data cleaning and picture tagging) and soft skills that bridge the gap between poverty and a new career in a globalized job market. Through wage-earning opportunities, refugees can achieve long-term food security.

Since inception in 2016, T4F has hosted more than 1,000 training classes across four different campuses in both Lebanon and Iraq, impacting the lives of over 3,000 refugees. T4F is poised to grow in 2018, with new technology trainings, more students and a larger number of partnerships with potential employers. The project aims to lift 100,000 people out of hunger in the next five years.

#### **H2Grow**

H2Grow is WFP's global hydroponics innovation. Hydroponics is a soilless cultivation technique that enables plant growth in non-fertile, arid or urban areas with limited space. It is cost efficient and saves resources, requiring 90 percent less water compared to traditional agriculture. WFP has conducted three pilots using different hydroponic crops and techniques to support food-insecure

families in harsh living conditions, such as urban slums, deserts and refugee camps.

In Algeria, one H2Grow hydroponic project grows barley for animal fodder to increase the amount and nutritious value of milk produced by domestic animals, which is a key component of local diets. Based on insights gained from the pilot phase, the project is successfully scaling up to reach 30,000 Sahrawi refugees in 2018, followed by deployment in Chad and other countries in the Sahel. H2Grow is a low cost innovation that uses local materials and empowers beneficiaries to be more self-sufficient. The Innovation Accelerator is currently developing a “do-it-yourself” online app, which will facilitate a further scale-up of H2Grow to different locations worldwide.



Calle Venezia



## Conclusion

Innovation implies improvement, and as you have read, the innovations highlighted in this volume have propelled the World Food Programme (WFP) from being perceived as “Truck Drivers” to one of the greatest humanitarian organisations in the world. The first major innovation in this volume was the tireless commitment of James Ingram to his vision of WFP as a critical organisation in the UN family. He also shifted focus to humanitarian assistance, bearing in mind that if: “WFP was to flourish, that is continue to be seen as relevant to international aid priorities over the long-run, the focus of its work must shift to emergency and protracted feeding.” Ingram also pursued the establishment of a proper WFP Headquarters in order to create a distinct identity for the organisation and its staff.

The desire to go beyond only feeding people to development in Bangladesh led to the founding of the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD). Angela Van Rynbach and others found that poultry rearing was the most viable income generating scheme for women. In a few years the programme reached 30,000 women and continued to grow exponentially. Instead of the usual relief and dependence model of humanitarian intervention, VGD is a self-reliance mechanism established on a sustainable platform, using local goods.

As global emergencies increased, WFP sought ways to organize its employees for better services and benefits. This is how the Unified Service, which Peter Lassig has written about, was created out of the diplomatic service concept. According to Lassig, the main difference between the diplomatic service and the Unified Service is that “the latter’s headquarters is the ‘home station,’ which in UN terms can only be used for locally recruited personnel. Unified Service staffers are considered internationally recruited even if employed in their home country.” A major concern was the creation of a flexible workforce to increase the movement of staff between country offices, field and headquarters, and between functional responsibilities.

As a voluntarily funded organisation, WFP was working with several complex financial arrangements, one of which was the requirement that one-third of a pledge in aggregate be paid in cash and up to two-thirds made as in-kind (commodities) contributions, when Suresh Sharma joined WFP. A major effect of this arrangement was the delay it created for food to reach beneficiaries. Therefore, WFP pursued various financial initiatives to reduce financial lead time in order to reach beneficiaries earlier. In twenty-five years, WFP achieved an eight month reduction in lead time.

We have also read about how Michele Mercaldo transformed his initial role of digging into transport paper files to find statistical reports on shipping activities, a difficult and time consuming task, to Commodity Tracking. Field staff can now be alerted when too much cargo is arriving against the capacity to move it out of

port. This may seem obvious in today's tech world, but it was a groundbreaking achievement for WFP at the time.

When Pablo Recalde and his colleagues created the Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) system, it was one of a kind in global food security and food aid history. VAM helped improve targeting by focusing on the right people at the right place and at the right time in order to improve understanding of the causes of vulnerability and hunger. It also "provided country offices with information about the appropriateness of food aid to address food insecurity, helped with making decisions on whether to use food aid to tackle transitory or structural causes of food insecurity, and helped with the identification of the intervention sectors." VAM remains an integral part of WFP operations.

When Catherine Bertini took over as Executive Director of WFP in 1992, women were not a major part of its operations as only 17 percent of its professional staff were women. Gretchen Bloom has given us an understanding of how Bertini embarked on a mission to diversify WFP by starting with a clear mission statement including gender equality at a time when only a few international organisations had such bold statements on gender. This vision was further expanded by the Commitments to Women. By 2002, half of a WFP Executive Staff group of 22 was from developing countries and one-third were women.

Hannah Laufer-Rottman was the WFP Representative in Ecuador between 1996-2002. She advocated for universal coverage of social programmes and successfully negotiated a USD 24 million donation from the US Government that she leveraged to secure an additional USD 10 million in government counterpart funds. This enabled WFP-Ecuador to feed 1.5 million people.

By the late 1990s, it had become difficult to serve humanity in a dangerous world. This is how WFP tapped Arlene Mitchell to lead the first WFP Security Awareness Training (SAT). The mandate was to improve staff safety and reduce the number of WFP staff deaths in the course of carrying out their duties. The programme has been credited for saving many staff lives in the line of duty to assist poor and hungry people.

As time changed and the new millennium approached, WFP needed a better communication system. Peter Casier and others initiated the Fast IT and Telecoms Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST). With "two guys and a screwdriver" at the helm, FITTEST grew into managing 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of warehousing space in Dubai, including deep-freezers and cold stores, as part of a 300,000m<sup>2</sup> compound. FITTEST transformed WFP into a communications leader in the UN system.

Georgia Shaver had only just been reassigned to Mozambique as a WFP Country Director in 1996 when a year later the UN introduced the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The Mozambique UN Country Team was selected as one of the 18 pilot countries to construct the strategic

medium term results framework that would describe a collective vision and coherent response of the UN system to national development priorities under the idea of “delivering as one.” As the WFP Country Director, Ms. Shaver provided leadership for WFP’s participation in the Mozambique UNDAF.

The idea of Integrated Programming sounds rather straightforward, but the earlier set up of WFP leadership and financial arrangements presented constraints for the establishment of a Sri Lankan Country Office with a multidimensional funding source—development, protracted relief and emergency operations. This idea was initially not endorsed because country programmes at the time were concerned only with development, excluding protracted relief and emergency. However, with the introduction of UNDAF in 1997, Suresh Sharma and others saw a conducive atmosphere for Integrated Programming. Sri Lanka, together with Mozambique and Angola, submitted the first Integrated UNDAF that contained elements of development, relief and recovery activities. WFP has now adopted an Integrated Road Map with a Country Strategic Plan that allows for a multidimensional funding approach to providing food and nutrition to poor and hungry people.

When Arlene Mitchell joined WFP in 1997, most humanitarian organisations had forgone school-feeding and moved to other programming ideas. Three years later, when President Bill Clinton announced USD 300 million for a Global Food for Education Initiative at a G8 Summit in Japan, WFP knew it was time to boost its school-feeding programme. The task of heading WFP’s unit to feed school children around the world fell to Mitchell. The School Feeding Unit, in collaboration with various partners, introduced several innovative approaches to school-feeding such as serious data collection through surveys, monitoring schools via satellite, introduction of new foods based on nutritional value, deworming and response measures to the HIV/AIDs epidemic.

The role of international organisations such as WFP is to assist people in need in nations that need help. It is considered a great success when nations previously needing assistance become leaders in providing help to their people. In this case, Trudy Bower has offered us her experiences as a WFP partner collaborating on Homegrown School Feeding Programmes in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana. Whenever an idea is homegrown, it offers the possibility of reducing or eliminating dependence on foreign assistance, which is the ultimate aim of international development.

WFP had gone from a time when it received food donations without the required funds for delivery to beneficiaries to a financial policy framework based on Full Cost Recovery, i.e., the idea that resources donated to WFP are for direct benefit to beneficiaries, and should therefore include all costs associated with the delivery of services, plus a small Indirect Support Cost for programme support and administration. A remaining issue was what to do with an in-kind donation that was not accompanied by the necessary cash. This, as Suresh Sharma

described in his third contribution to this volume, was the premise for the creation of the Emerging Donors Matching Fund. The idea was an investment in Treasury STRIPS (Separate Trading of Registered Interest and Principal of Securities) that generated the seed money for an Emerging Donors Matching Fund.

Sebastian Stricker came to WFP in 2011 as a policy officer exploring global strategic issues and policy trends. While at WFP, he learned that it costs only USD 0.50 to feed one child for a day, when that amount cannot even pay for a bottle of water in Rome. At the same time, the number of smartphone users in the world was growing exponentially past two billion. Sebastian and his colleague Bernhard Kowatsch started thinking of possible ways to bring these two groups, children in need and smartphone users, together to develop a crowdfunding solution to hunger. This is how ShareTheMeal was created to help fight hunger. With a single tap, users can "share their meals" with hungry children and each donation of just USD 0.50 enables WFP to feed a child for a day. In June 2013, a pilot of the ShareTheMeal app was launched in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The app was downloaded by more than 120,000 people and provided more than 1.8 million school meals to children in Lesotho—the app's first fundraising target. ShareTheMeal became global in 2015 and its first global campaign was to raise funds to give school meals to 20,000 Syrian refugee children living in the Zaatari camp in Jordan for a year.

When Mario Merino joined WFP in 2015, the Innovation Accelerator or Innovation Lab had just been set up. WFP had finally created a formal institution to "identify and nurture the most innovative ideas, and to turn them into high impact, scalable opportunities." In this short time, the Accelerator has supported more than 30 projects around the world and another seven innovations set for scale up in 2018. These projects have already benefited 144 million people around the world and there is the potential to impact the lives of millions of people in the coming years.

These are just a few of the innovative ideas that have made WFP an outstanding humanitarian organisation. These innovations were possible because successive Executive Directors provided leadership and created the environment for staff to take initiatives. The organisation can now manage drones, fleets, smartphone applications, and supercomputers, but it still has no problem using truck drivers and donkeys where these are the most effective links to those in need. The Innovation Accelerator promises exciting new innovations that will continue to keep WFP ahead of the game in service to poor and hungry people around the world. We are grateful to the contributors who have taken their time to share these stories of innovation with us.

Sincerely,

Joseph Kaifala, Editor

## Editorial Panel



Joseph Kaifala, Editor



Dr. Suresh Sharma, Chair



Gretchen Bloom, Member



Mohamed Saleheen, Member



Angela Van Rynbach, Member



Peggy Nelson Member



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