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Special Preparedness Activities in Armenia

Standard Project Report 2016

World Food Programme in Armenia, Republic of (AM)



World Food Programme

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Country Context and WFP Objectives



Country Context

Armenia is a lower-middle income, landlocked, net food importer country vulnerable to external shocks. Despite significant macro-economic progress and structural reforms implemented in Armenia during the last decade, a rising state debt and weakening economic growth from 3.0 in 2015 to 2.4 in 2016 have strained the government budget, hindering implementation of adequate social safety nets, reducing investments in the education and health sectors to 2.2 and 1.5 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) respectively. Armenia ranks 85 out of 188 in the 2015 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report and 62 out of 155 on the Gender Inequality Index.

According to the World Bank, Armenia is listed in the top 60 countries exposed to multiple hazards, and is the most shock-prone country in Central Asia and Caucasus region [1]. Simultaneous natural earthquake, climate and environmental risks, together with conflict-related risks may prompt significant economic losses and adversely impact food security. Eighty percent of its inhabitants are at constant high risk of exposure to catastrophic events. In any given year, there is a 20 percent probability that a major disaster will result in losses of 12.7 percent of country's GDP. Since 2014, geopolitical risk rose, with a sharp escalation of the tensions within the region.

In 2015, the poverty rate in Armenia remained above the pre-2009-crisis level with 29.8 percent. Households headed by women are 33 percent more likely to be living in extreme poverty. Women's participation in the labour market is 54.2 percent compared to 72.6 for men [2]. The multidimensional poverty index offers insights into the complexity, depth and persistence of poverty, while measuring deprivations in education, health, employment, housing, and extreme poverty. The analysis of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative shows a clear

correlation between poverty, food insecurity and education [3]. Educational (school attendance) and health indicators (child mortality and nutrition) are contributing as much as 90 percent to the overall poverty value. According to Comprehensive Food Security, Vulnerability, and Nutrition Analysis, undertaken by WFP in partnership with the National Statistics Service and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), 15 percent of the households were food insecure and 28 percent at risk of becoming food insecure in 2015. Range of crosscutting gender considerations linked to cultural norms might result in disparities between men and women. These include gender-based disparities in access to and wage differences in the labour market, and limited opportunities for women to access economic resources. The coexistence of undernutrition (19 percent stunting), overweight or obesity (15 percent) and micronutrient deficiencies is a growing challenge.

In the past decade, Armenia progressed towards achieving universal primary school enrolment with almost equal proportion for girls and boys. A similar situation prevails in higher grades, with 94 percent of women who have reached secondary education compared to 95 percent of the men. Women's high level of educational attainment has not resulted always in corresponding gains in the labour market. Dropout rates and low secondary school completion rates indicate that education quality remains a major challenge especially in poor communities. According to UNICEF, 60 percent of pre-school age children do not attend pre-schools due to the absence of pre-school facilities in their communities or poverty. While school tuition is free, education remains costly for vulnerable families who experience difficulties to cover the minimal costs related to schooling supplies, clothing and associated necessities. Girls are less likely to be absent from schools than boys and perform better.

[1] World Bank, Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management in Armenia

[2] UNDP, Integrated Living Conditions Survey (LCS) 2014, HDI report, 2015

[3] Oxford Poverty and Human Development Index, Country Briefing, Armenia, 2016

Response of the Government and Strategic Coordination

The Government of Armenia has developed strategic frameworks for poverty reduction and social protection, together with sector-specific policies and programmes intended to strengthen agricultural development, and decrease malnutrition. The Armenian Development Strategy 2014-2025 is the principal framework for poverty reduction through sustainable economic growth. The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy 2015-2025 aims at reducing rural poverty and promoting inclusive agricultural income-generation. The National Strategy on Child Nutrition 2014-2020 formulates the vision to target malnutrition, though only among children. Aligned with the government agenda, WFP is contributing to three out of the four pillars of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF): 1) equitable, sustainable economic development and poverty reduction, 2) social services and inclusion and 3) environmental sustainability and resilience-building. WFP supported national efforts to inform the nationalisation of SDG 2, Zero Hunger, and 17, Partnerships, for the Goals. A Zero Hunger Strategic Review will identify policy and operational gaps in the current framework, and potential measures to reach the goal. It will contribute to bringing greater coherence to development planning and improve partnerships between stakeholders to maximize synergies and impact. Within the celebrations of 2016 World Food Day, WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Armenia partnered for the first time to raise awareness on the Zero Hunger agenda. Joint activities promoted the importance of local agricultural development and sustainable safety nets to achieve the Zero Hunger goal.

Whereas the Government functions to achieve Zero Hunger lie across various ministries, the Ministry of Agriculture is the primary actor for food security. The Comprehensive Food Security, Vulnerability and Nutrition Analysis nurtured the country's agenda on hunger and malnutrition. The findings highlighted the importance of deepening coordination among actors to foster a comprehensive approach towards all dimensions of food security. The country's main focus is on food availability, while access, utilisation, and sustainability considerations are often undermined or not considered holistically. The functional areas' disaggregation might hamper coordination between line ministries and development actors around cross-sectoral themes.

School meals has become a national priority and the Government is gradually taking over the programme in four out of all ten provinces of Armenia. Funding was mainstreamed through the State Budget Medium-term Expenditure Framework: USD 3.9 million to cover the costs of three provinces for the period of 2016-2018 and additional USD 0.7 million for a fourth province from September 2017. WFP continued augmenting the Government's capacity at central and local levels through targeted interventions, with the vision for sustainable and quality hand-over of the programme in all provinces by 2023. After the roll-out of the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) in April 2016, in partnership with the World Bank and Partnerships for Child Development, WFP supported the Government in developing a new comprehensive National School Meals Policy. WFP is pursuing partnerships and joint advocacy with the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to

promote nutrition-sensitive programming and integration of the school meals programme into the national social protection system. WFP also fosters coordination with FAO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) to promote linkages between the school meals programme and the local agricultural production.

WFP contributed significantly to building the evidence for the Government's informed policy and programme planning. Advocating for all dimensions of food security, the life-cycle approach to nutrition, WFP brings added value to these sectors. A cost-benefit analysis of the National school meals programme, conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science and MasterCard proved that each dollar invested in the National school meals has an economic return of USD 7.1. The 18th Global Child Nutrition Forum, which is the world-wide largest forum on school meals, was organized in Armenia in September 2016 and provided a sound platform for strengthening the South-South cooperation framework.

Summary of WFP Operational Objectives

WFP has initiated strategic thinking on SDG 2, Zero Hunger and positioned itself in the policy dialogue on the country's key challenges of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, through evidence building for informed policies and programming on social protection and emergency preparedness. Strategic and operational partnerships with international and national development actors became essential to influence cross-sectoral coordination, moving away from a fragmented approach.

WFP continued focusing on school meals, adjusting its role from direct implementer, and taking a greater facilitator role, introducing innovations in its implementation and scaling up technical support to facilitate the hand-over process. Launched in 2010, WFP's School Meals Development Project pursued a two-fold objective: 1) to support the food security and education of children, and 2) to support the Government in developing and implementing a sustainable national school feeding programme.

WFP engaged in policy dialogue not only with the Ministry of Education and Science, but with five line Ministries, to strengthen the benefits of school meals. Major changes have occurred already in the handover strategy with clearly defined milestones, including the design of a national school meals policy and a capacity-strengthening strategy.

While actively advocating for the strengthened government ownership, WFP supported the creation of an enabling environment within the host Government. This has resulted in the Government's commitment for taking over the additional province of Tavush in 2017, and a firm assurance for allocating financial and human resources for taking over one province each year.

To facilitate the handover to the Government and improve the programme nutritional value, WFP initiated steps to move progressively its implementation from a fully centralized provision of in-kind food to a decentralized cash-based transfer modality.

WFP supported the Government in establishing the Republican School Meals Training Center, which will serve as the in-country resource for conducting capacity development activities and the State School Feeding Foundation, which will function as a management and implementation unit of the Government to sustain the National School Meals programme. WFP provided its expertise in the development of training materials, aiming at training the trainers to enhance their knowledge in the multiple components of school meals implementation: menu composition, food management and safety, procurement, accounting, monitoring.

WFP had two projects and a Trust Fund, which responded to the Government's needs to implement sustainable school meals and to strengthen the emergency preparedness in case of escalation of the tensions in the region over Nagorno-Karabagh. Both projects are contributing to the SDG 2, Zero Hunger, and SDG 17, Partnerships, for the Goals.

Development Programme DEV 200128 (2010-2017) with approved budget of USD 28 million to support the service delivery of school meals to 60,000 beneficiaries with the vision of a gradually completed handover by 2023; and provision of technical assistance to the Government to support the roll-out of the national and sustainable school meals programme.

Trust Fund worth USD 0.1 million was allocated by the Government to the WFP administered school meals to cover the cost of the internal transportation, storage and handling costs of food provided.

Immediate Response Preparedness (IR-PREP) 200968 (April 2016- November 2016) with the approved budget of USD 0.28 million to enhance the Government preparedness and coordination capacities and WFP's role and response activities in Armenia, should the tensions around Nagorno-Karabagh conflict escalate or an earthquake strike the country.

Country Resources and Results

Resources for Results

WFP's project achieved tangible results due to the momentous multi-year directed, multilateral contributions from its single donor, the Russian Federation, together with the highest commitment of the host Government, which continued funding the food internal transportation, storage and handling costs of the WFP-administered project. Compared to previous years, annual funding needs have increased in 2016, resulting from a greater strategic positioning, the organisation of XVIII Global Child Nutrition Forum (GCNF) contributing to South-South cooperation, the drastic scaling-up of the capacity reinforcement activities and the provision of technical support for the sustainable handover, while maintaining the direct provision of food to the schools.

The project has been receiving generous and predictable funding since 2010, amounting to a total of USD 21 million until mid-2016, which allowed WFP to reach defined targets and accomplish the expected activities. This contribution allowed to re-initiate a school meals programme in Armenia after decades of interruption since the 1980s. The programme has already reached results and is moving towards fully operational, nationally owned school meals, gradually incorporating multiple benefits.

An additional USD 7 million contribution from the Ministry of Finance of the Russian Federation was confirmed for the period covering 2016-2018. A USD 1 million contribution was donated by the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the Russian Federation for 2016. The Government of Armenia continued funding the food internal transportation, storage and handling costs of the WFP-administered project worth USD 104,000. This new Russian contribution allowed organising the GCNF, and fostered the Government's ownership thanks to a major increase of WFP's technical expertise, provided at all levels. This technical support ranged from a series of comprehensive analysis to inform policy and programming, to trainings and experience exchange initiatives both on international and local levels. It also enabled WFP to initiate its support for the creation of the National School Meals Foundation and the Republican School Meals Training Centre, established by the Government decree N1391 of 22 December 2016, which will become the main implementation, coordination, and capacity development unit of the national programme. The funding will secure the continued provision of food assistance in WFP-supported schools, kitchen rehabilitation - enabling schools to provide hot meals, and the gradual introduction of the cash modality in three provinces.

WFP improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the supply chain for sound project implementation, and introduced a real-time monitoring tool, supported by information technology (IT). The newly installed IT equipment sped up all phases of the monitoring process, which allowed recording more accurately the food balance information and minimised the risk of end-of-year food losses. Moreover, conclusive negotiations with commodity suppliers to tailor the packaging to the actual school day's needs allowed minimising further the food balances in schools during the breaks to exclude losses of expired food.

Achievements at Country Level

WFP together with partners steered analysis and advocacy initiatives to raise awareness and strengthen the government capacity to tackle these issues. Findings and recommendations of comprehensive analyses provided a better understanding of multiple dimensions of food insecurity, especially on access and utilisation, and the prioritisation of these concerns on the agenda of Government and key development actors, including donors. These efforts fostered a holistic scrutiny of the root causes and implications of food insecurity and malnutrition on Armenia's sustainable economic development. The partnership engaged with the National Statistics Service and the Caucasus Research Resource Centre to support annual food security analysis in national research programming. Partnerships with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the World Bank resulted in the inclusion of food insecurity assessments during the evaluation and development of targeted social protection interventions for vulnerable households by social workers. WFP initiated its support of the Government by conducting a National Zero Hunger Strategic Review. This expertise combined with vigorously built partnerships provided a solid basis to position WFP as a sound capacity enabler at the policy-level dialogue, rather than sole implementer of school meals.

WFP significantly strengthened the understanding of multiple facets of school meals programmes, including educational, nutritional, social protection and local agricultural development benefits. The National programme's cost analysis proved that the provision of a nutritious school meal programme is a long-term investment with sturdy economic, social and educational returns. WFP support and advocacy on local and regional levels for the provision of universal nutrition-sensitive hot meals saw a gradual shift from the provision of snacks to nutritious hot meals in

87.7 percent of schools under the National programme. The organisation of the 18th Global Child Nutrition Forum (GCNF), hosted for the first time in the Central Asia region, nurtured the central level government's strategic shift with the Minister of Education and Science actively promoting the provision of hot meals under the school meals programme. Discussions with the Prime Minister's Cabinet to establish the State School Meals Foundation highlighted the importance of linking the programme with local agricultural production.

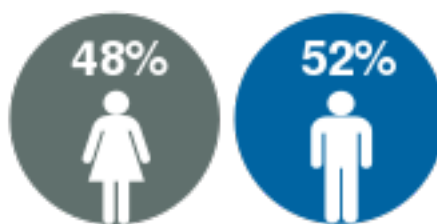
WFP supported the Government in conducting the Systems Approach for Better Educational Results (SABER), which allowed an assessment of the National school meals policies and strategies, for development of new comprehensive school meals policy, in line with five policy standards of SABER [1]. The Government endorsed the SABER report in August, which highlighted the need for inclusion of the multiple impacts, of the provision of school meals, in various sector's policies.

[1] SABER Five policy standards are: 1) policy frameworks, 2) financial and institutional capacities, 3) institutional capacity and coordination, 4) design and implementation, and 5) community participation.

Annual Country Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	751	819	1,570
Children (5-18 years)	32,165	28,203	60,368
Adults (18 years plus)	2,868	3,483	6,351
Total number of beneficiaries in 2016	35,784	32,505	68,289





Annual Food Distribution in Country (mt)

Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Development Project	2,107	127	174	-	-	2,407
Total Food Distributed in 2016	2,107	127	174	-	-	2,407

Supply Chain

Armenia is a landlocked country and has closed borders with neighbouring Turkey and Azerbaijan since 1991. This has resulted in restricting the number of supply chain corridors to only two. The first potential corridor is from the North, using the Georgian port of Poti, and the second one is from the South, through the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. The majority of importers, including the humanitarian community, are using the northern corridor to bring goods to Armenia, especially when importing goods from Europe and the Russian Federation, as the northern corridor is shorter and infrastructure is better developed.

All food consignments were purchased from the Russian Federation, under the agreed delivery terms with the supplier delivering the commodities directly to the WFP warehouse in Armenia. Consignments were received at the WFP warehouse located in the North of Armenia, from where storage was arranged and subsequent delivery of food organised to the schools under direct WFP programme administration. Six food commodities were regularly delivered to 600 schools throughout seven provinces. Transportation of these commodities was organised with commercial trucking companies selected through a competitive and transparent tendering process.

WFP systematically ensured that the quality and safety of imported commodities are in line with the highest standards. In addition to the commodity quality certification documents issued in the supplier's country, WFP contracted an external independent company for quantity and quality check of commodities imported in the host country, which provided additional guarantees for food safety. The in-country transport, storage and handling (ITSH) costs were covered by the host government.

Starting from 2015, Armenia joined Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), represented by the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation. With its mission of regional economic integration, the EEU brought to Armenia minimised external transportation and associated costs. As a result of Armenia's accession to EEU, WFP revisited its supply chain procedures and obtained release from customs clearance and food certification related fees. Another adjustment improving the cost efficiency of the supply chain was the shift from the rail-car transportation to land-line car option. This change avoided the substantial fees related to the detention and storage charges of the rail-car, which brought a decrease of 10 percent to overall transportation and handling costs.

Significant improvements in planning and distribution cycles successfully minimised the food losses and obstructions in delivery, compared to previous years. WFP performed good warehouse practices, with measures related to dis-infestation and repackaging, which induced negligible post-delivery losses. To prevent potential pipeline breaks, the supply chain is tailored to have two to three months of required food commodities at the

warehouse. Although there was no local procurement in 2016, WFP prepared a procurement plan to initiate the local procurement of wheat flour, pasta and buckwheat in the coming year.

As of June, WFP began using the Logistics Execution Support Services (LESS) for commodity tracking system, which improved commodity tracking at all stages, including the online review of the commodity balance and expiration dates, minimizing the Internal Transport, Storage and Handling (ITSH) costs through avoiding potential double dispatching and improving food safety considerations, in addition to better monitoring and reporting practices.



Annual Food Purchases for the Country (mt)

Commodity	Local	Regional/International	Total
Buckwheat	-	20	20
Pasta	-	40	40
Rice	-	40	40
Split Peas	-	80	80
Vegetable Oil	-	80	80
Wheat Flour	-	1,320	1,320
Total	-	1,580	1,580
Percentage	-	100.0%	

Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned

An independent operation evaluation of the DEV 200128 project undertaken in February 2015 provided seven strategic and operational recommendations on improving the implementation's effectiveness: 1) facilitate transitioning from direct implementer towards enabler of national ownership through a well-defined handover plan; 2) rethink the school meals strategy; 3) improve gender equality impact; 4) reinforce knowledge transfer to the Government; 5) strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system; 6) improve partnerships and; 7) invest in studies to build evidence for solid policy and programme design.

Noteworthy advocacy efforts combined with a major scale-up of technical support and training activities for strengthening national ownership brought to the formal establishment of a State School Meals Foundation by the Prime Minister. The Minister of Education and Science agreed on a full handover by 2023, taking on a minimum of one province every year and securing resources.

The Systems Approach for Better Educational Results (SABER) exercise, establishing a comprehensive diagnostic and gap analysis of existing regulatory frameworks of relevant sectors, will be the basis for the development of the new National school meals policy reflecting on the programme's multiple dimensions. This allowed WFP to define a clear capacity strengthening strategy for Armenia and serves as a baseline for the National Capacity Index.

A Gender Action Plan was developed, encapsulating strategic and operational interventions focusing on women economic empowerment – a major gender equality gap according to the 2016 Country Gender Assessment report of Asian Development Bank [1]. Emphasis was put on gender-sensitive programme implementation, including defining output level indicators disaggregated by age and gender, intentional targeting of unemployed women from rural communities for activities within its school meals programme.

Lessons learned from the handover of the first provinces revealed the need for a gradual approach with adequate forward planning and targeted local and regional capacity development activities to prevent reversing the programme quality. In preparation for the forthcoming handover of schools in Tavush province, WFP revisited its school infrastructure assessment methodology, mobilised partners for infrastructure improvements and fostered

coordination of interventions among state agencies for hygiene and sanitation, construction, finance and education. To empower the school administrations and regional authorities in their implementation of the National school meals programme, WFP prepared to shift from its current centralised provision of in-kind assistance to decentralised cash-based transfers, provided together with corresponding training. This model developed will be replicated in all provinces.

To increase the accuracy and timeliness of information related to programme implementation, WFP strengthened its monitoring and evaluation system, revisited the indicators and introduced a real-time electronic mobile system, with the aim of gradually transferring monitoring capacity to the Government.

WFP's major effort to build multiple partnerships with donors, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) created synergies, enabling the provision of essential infrastructure support packages to schools, including nutrition-sensitive programming with new greenhouses and school gardens established in 20 percent of schools. These efforts brought multiplier effects of WFP resources for school rehabilitation and refurbishment and enriched food diversity in schools with fresh fruits and vegetables.

WFP invested in comprehensive studies and research, including food insecurity and malnutrition analysis, the Investment Case proving the economic returns of national school meals programme, and Integrated Context Analysis. These analytical exercises meaningfully strengthened evidence-based policy and programming and supported advocacy efforts.

[1] Asian Development Bank, Armenia, Country Gender Assessment, 2015

Project Objectives and Results

Project Objectives

The significant escalation of the tension over Nagorno Karabakh (NK) in early April 2016 resulted in the displacement of 2,247 people to Armenia from 681 families, as debriefed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [1]. The joint UNHCR-WFP-Armenian Red Cross Society rapid assessment undertaken in early April, revealed that majority of the displaced were women, children and elderly people.

The security situation in bordering communities of Armenia remained volatile and tense, with sporadic ceasefire violations leading to casualties, and significant infrastructure and housing damage in NK, as well as the bordering province of Tavush. In the event of a series of major ceasefire violations, the number of displaced could raise significantly.

In light of these developments, WFP requested funding allocation from the Immediate Response Account (IRA) for Immediate Response Preparedness (IR-Prep) in Armenia, which was approved on 27 April 2016. The received funds contributed to WFP's corporate objectives, including the reduction of effects of shocks on household food and nutrition security, which is aligned with the United Nations Secretary-General's Zero Hunger Challenge. The three specific objectives were to: 1) strengthen the country office's level of emergency preparedness and response; 2) foster coordination with the Government and humanitarian partners and; 3) ensure an effective and efficient immediate response to meet urgent food and nutrition needs in case of emergency.

While preparedness activities primarily focused on population displacement, a major earthquake scenario was considered too, since the majority of the main population centers in Armenia are located in High or High Very earthquake hazard area according to the official earthquake hazard map [1]. Moreover, all three specific objectives of the IR-prep project are equally applicable to the earthquake scenario, which has been ranked as the highest natural disaster risk in terms of impact and likelihood according to the Seismic Protection Survey Agency of the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MoES). According to the Head of the Seismic Protection Agency of the MoES, in 2015 there has been 117 earthquakes of which 5 had significant magnitude.

The IR-PREP's objectives stem from WFP Strategic objective 1 - Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies - investing in emergency preparedness actions, arrangements and procedures in anticipation of an emergency to ensure that the response, when needed, will be rapid, appropriate and effective.

[1] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Highlights of Armenia, 2016. <http://un.am/en/agency/UNHCR>



Approved Budget for Project Duration (USD)

Cost Category	
Direct Support Costs	262,007
Indirect Support Costs	18,340
Total	280,347

Project Activities

Mapping Exercise: At the on-set of the escalation of the tensions around Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) region, WFP together with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Armenian Red Cross Society immediately deployed a mission to the vicinity of Syunik province of Armenia, to assess the scale of displacement and immediate needs. This was followed by the launch of a three-month Immediate Response Preparedness

(IR-Prep) project. Throughout the project, the IR-Prep team identified and met all relevant actors, which prompted several mapping exercises. The “General Mapping of Responsibilities of the Central and Local Authorities” highlighted key state actors’ responsibilities and coordination mechanisms, including the regulation of distribution of humanitarian aid, provided a general overview of the identified gaps between the existing and desired levels of emergency preparedness and response capacities.

Gap Analysis and Planning: Two Concepts of Operations (ConOps) were formulated for an escalation of the tension over Nagorno Karabakh (NK) and an earthquake scenario. Both highlighted the scope and scale of potential emergency according to the different contingency plans, developed a functional emergency preparedness (EPR) framework with WFP’s operational response, resource requirements, coordination mechanisms, procurements, logistics and telecommunication arrangements.

Strengthening Coordination at Central and Regional levels: Individual meetings with central government and regional authorities clarified the communication flow between central and regional levels. The comprehensive report reflects the EPR capacities and limitations specified by the local authorities, mainly focusing on core organisational and technical capacities, community engagement and cooperation.

A large scale emergency simulation exercise for an earthquake scenario was organized by the Ministry of Emergency Situations, with the support of United Nations Development Programme. The event was aimed to strengthen the Government’s internal and external coordination capacities and response strategies during the emergencies. WFP lead a separate session on its mandate and operations in Armenia, with a particular focus on logistics capacities, food security interventions and the cash based transfers, planned to be introduced under the development project. The exercise revealed the need for revision of government policies, which resulted in drafting a new Strategy on Emergency Preparedness.

During the United Nations Country Team coordination meetings, WFP IR-Prep team provided extensive presentations on WFP’s leading role in Inter-Agency logistics and radio-communication areas as well as co-leading role with Food and Agriculture Organisation in food security.

Key international and national humanitarian actors were mapped, which allowed WFP to identify potential non-governmental cooperating partners throughout the country. WFP conducted a comprehensive mapping of key non-governmental humanitarian and development actors, which were assessed against systematic criteria, including their respective areas of activity, geographical coverage together with former experience with governments and donors in emergency situations. Based on results of the assessments and meetings with 25 potential partners, 14 Field Level Agreements were prepared, to be immediately signed in case of emergency.

Strengthening WFP’s capacity on emergency preparedness: With numerous simultaneous complex emergencies worldwide, it was a challenge to identify a qualified emergency coordinator and a logistics officer was identified. Two experienced national consultants, including a woman, were recruited to augment the emergency team and balance its gender composition. In addition, seven missions from Headquarters and Regional Bureau and two trainings for the national team were organized.

The Logistics Capacity Assessment was updated in light of Armenia accession to Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which is inducing changes in WFP’ supply chain procedures, including customs clearance and food certification procedures.

The head of Operations for WFP’s Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency and Support Team (FITTEST) came for a two-week mission to review and strengthen the EPR capacity, including leading the Emergency Telecommunication Cluster (ETC) in case of activation and the accountability to affected population (AAP). A telecommunication risk register, a business continuity and disaster recovery plan was prepared with potential available hardware, human and financial resources clearly identified. A telecommunication working group was initiated. The comprehensive set of findings and recommendations presented in a report are followed-up on by WFP, including the provision of a week-long training of the office telecommunication assistant in Dubai.

Two missions from WFP Headquarters and Regional Bureau on market analysis and cash-based transfer (CBT) feasibility and market analysis were organized in consultations with the relevant Government structures. While the direct cash transfers to affected populations was identified as the most appropriate option in case of man-made disaster, the provision of general distribution of food followed by direct cash transfer would be the most appropriate in the aftermath of an earthquake. These responses would support the recovery of local markets and maximize the nutritional cost effectiveness through local supply. The food basket and the transfer value were determined in alignment with WFP corporate standards to provide 2,100 Kcal per person per day.

Two missions allowed WFP to assess appropriate feasibility and to actually install a real-time monitoring system based on the “Geo-referenced Real Time Acquisition of Statistics Platform” (GRASP), which would be the monitoring system in case of emergency.

WFP designed and underwent a two-day emergency simulation exercise (SimEx) to test its own capacities and weaknesses. Under an earthquake scenario, roles were attributed to simulate coordination with all actors, initial rapid assessment, activation of clusters, the intervention's design, selection of cooperating partners, drafting funding proposals for emergency response to Central Emergency Response Fund together with an Immediate Response Emergency Operations, and preparation of a situation report and communication strategy. WFP minimum emergency preparedness actions, together with standard operating procedures were updated. A debriefing session concluded the results of the exercise highlighting gaps and how to address them, leading to the revision of the ConOps. Key response priorities and relevant capacities were improved, as well security and security advice for staff safety and operational continuity were reinforced.

Operational Partnerships

Meetings with 40 Central Government officials and all ten Regional Governors established clear lines of communication at central and regional levels, and allowed to present WFP's mandate and capacity to respond to potential crises, as well as to obtain agreements for active engagement in coordination platforms. The comprehensive report reflects the emergency preparedness coordination capacities and limitations specified by the local authorities, mainly focusing on core organizational and technical capacities, community engagement and cooperation.

Under the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) coordination, Disaster Management Country Team (DMCT) meetings and three joint field missions were organised, which allowed to update DMCT contingency plans. To ensure all actors fully understand Clusters operational modalities and are comfortable with a joint collaborative approach in case of emergencies, WFP communicated its leading role in Inter-Agency logistics and radio-communication areas as well as co-leading role with Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in food security. These included specific presentations provided to the regional and central government structures, and development partners, which allowed to raise awareness on Clusters and the functional role of each actor during the emergency. Together with FAO, WFP led the development of a Food Security Cluster Response' Strategy to ensure a coordinated and cohesive response to food insecurity in case of humanitarian crises. The Strategy was discussed with the government structures and key partners during the Food Security Coordination Group meetings, organized for the first time in Armenia to define roles and responsibilities of Cluster members.

Key international and national humanitarian actors were mapped, which allowed WFP to identify 14 out of 25 potential non-governmental cooperating partners throughout the country. WFP engaged the discussion with these 14 selected partners on their potential cooperation. The possibility of a Service Level Agreement was explored with the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Performance Monitoring

After headquarters approved the project, WFP developed a detailed monitoring plan for the foreseen activities with a timeline, clear outputs and a detailed itemised expenditure plan. The performance monitoring plan was built based on various monitoring and reporting tools. Standardized attendance sheets were developed to track the participation of the various stakeholders at meetings and consultations. WFP promptly produced the official notes and minutes after each meeting or consultation with involved stakeholders. The completion of mission reports by regional and headquarter officers was ensured in order to highlight concrete target achievements versus planned results. Lastly, WFP developed an activity-based expenditure tracking tool to monitor the planned versus actual project delivery rate on a real time frequency.

The project team conducted 50 face-to-face consultations and meetings with high-level Central and Regional Government officials. WFP participated in six coordination meetings and joint field missions, with other UN agencies. As a result of this cooperation, WFP's role in clusters and joint programming is well understood and agreed upon. To assess the capacities and potential for future collaboration, meetings were organized with 25 local and international non-governmental organisations. The results of these capacity' assessments were concluded in two comprehensive reports and 14 Field Level Agreements, which were developed and submitted for consideration to the selected organisations. A mapping report on roles and responsibilities of governmental structures, as well as two Concepts of Operations were developed.

Six mission reports were drafted following the WFP Headquarters and Regional officers' missions, with their recommendations addressed by the project team. As a result of the simulation exercise, designed for a large scale earthquake scenario, 21 members of WFP staff were trained on multiple aspects of emergency preparedness. Around 50 people were intentionally targeted for raising awareness of the cluster approach and WFP's role. These efforts were summarized in around 65 Notes for the records, six mission reports, two concepts of operation and three mapping exercises.

Results/Outcomes

WFP positioning and capacity development: Overall, the Immediate Response Preparedness project (IR-PREP) significantly contributed to enhance the level of WFP emergency preparedness capacities and knowledge, at both the organizational and programmatic level. The IR-PREP became a powerful tool in positioning WFP vis-à-vis government and relevant stakeholders. Activities under this framework directly or indirectly positioned WFP in multiple emergency response coordination mechanisms, mainstreaming WFP's role in the Inter-Agency Contingency Planning, raising its visibility as a credible actor with the higher representatives of key state and local authorities.

The preparation and implementation of the simulation exercise provided knowledge to all WFP staff members, available in the country, and some of the invited guests from relevant UN agencies on the various aspects of emergency preparedness, reinforcing communication and coordination within the teams. Each staff member is better equipped and has a greater understanding of their potential role during the onset of an emergency situation. As a result, WFP is better prepared to respond to different types of emergencies, including the relocation and/or evacuation of personnel.

WFP's readiness to operate has been significantly augmented with the two Concept of Operations formulation and the potential food assistance response design. All humanitarian organizations with significant presence and capacities in-country have been identified and 14 Field Level Agreements have been pre-negotiated to establish swift cooperation in the onset of an emergency.

Moreover, WFP introduced a real-time monitoring system: Geo-referenced Real Time Acquisition of Statistics Platform (GRASP). WFP monitoring assistants are now able to download the data on tablets and phones, speeding-up the entire process from data collection to data analysis, which is a critical feature for introducing a real-time emergency monitoring system. The IR-PREP enabled the upgrade of WFP's Minimum Operating Residential Security Standards (MORSS) compliance together with its satellite phone and radio systems.

Government capacity mapping and gap analysis: The comprehensive mapping activity upgraded WFP's understanding of the existing national emergency-related policy and legislation, fostered relationships with relevant state authorities, and prompted durable partnerships with a wide range of humanitarian partners, including the International Committee of Red Cross. It identified responsibilities, capacities but also likely shortcomings. Well-structured emergency preparedness and response mechanisms from central to local levels are enshrined in the legislation. However, government representatives identified funding constraints as one of the major challenges, which might hamper adequate implementation during emergency situations. Hence, in case of an emergency, certain discrepancies might occur between the legal obligations and regulations and their actual implementation. Greater emphasis might be given to allow actual implementation of preparedness-enhancing actions.

Targeted and informed intervention analysis: A secondary outcome achieved by the project is the continuum between EPR and longer-term activities, to be conducted through the utilization of the Integrated Context Analysis (ICA). Undertaken in the framework of the Development project, the ICA analysed the historical trend of food security, natural shocks, and land degradation in Armenia. ICA identified and fostered the discussion among partners on the most appropriate programmatic strategies in specific geographical areas. According to representatives of the central and local authorities, government's resources are geared mainly towards mitigating the consequences of disasters. Therefore, the ICA analysis allowed to identify the multiple vulnerabilities of the specific regions for initiating appropriate and targeted early warning, disaster risk reduction and resilience building interventions, hence contributing to the preparedness of communities and people to large scale emergencies.

Progress Towards Gender Equality

The joint United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)-WFP-Armenian Red Cross Society rapid assessment undertaken in early April, prior to the Immediate Response Preparedness project (IR-PREP), revealed that majority of the displaced were women, children and elderly people.

During the interaction with state and local level authorities, no women were present among high ranked state officials. According to Gender Country Assessment of Asian Development Bank, gender-related cultural norms in Armenia contribute to women's lower levels of representation in politics and there are no female Heads of Province. Only two women occupy the post of Deputy Heads of Province. In the capital city Yerevan, less than ten percent of municipal administration departments are led by women. Gender policy, strategies and action plans exist in Armenia, yet their implementation would need to be further mainstreamed.

These observations call for greater and more active roles of women in decision-making, management and implementation of emergency situations. Moreover, citizens with disabilities are among the highly marginalized and vulnerable groups in time of disasters. This suggests the need for a more inclusive consultative process of these vulnerable groups in the Emergency Preparedness plans of the Government.

WFP designed its potential intervention to contribute to a gender-sensitive response to urgent food and nutrition needs, including through leadership of the logistics and emergency telecommunications clusters and co-leadership of the food security cluster with Food and Agriculture Organization. The proposed Field Level Agreements with potential partners include WFP's Gender Equality, Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations template, as an integral annex to the FLA to ensure that the basic principles of safety, dignity, integrity and gender sensitive programming are considered during potential joint interventions.

Figures and Indicators

Data Notes

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Lori Province, meeting between Lori Regional Administration office and WFP on emergency preparedness

Project Indicators

Output Indicators

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
SO1: Capacity Development - Emergency Preparedness				
Number of bulletins, gap analysis, 3Ws, maps and other information products compiled and shared	item	3	3	100.0%
Number of food security and nutrition monitoring/surveillance reports produced with WFP support	report	1	1	100.0%
Number of guidance document developed and circulated	item	16	16	100.0%
Number of people trained	individual	25	22	88.0%