

Delivering Results: Innovative Tools for Humanitarian Food Assistance
WFP-hosted Interactive Breakfast Session
(International Peace Institute – 8–9am, 22 September)

For decades the World Food Programme has provided life-saving food to the most vulnerable people in the world. But in recent years WFP has transformed itself from a food aid into a food assistance agency, broadening its toolbox to deliver sustainable hunger solutions that help populations recover in humanitarian situations. Some of these food assistance tools have been used in more traditional settings, but are being innovatively deployed in humanitarian settings, such as cash and vouchers, school feeding and food-based job creation schemes. Others are new, such as targeted nutrition intervention products, and Purchase for Progress (P4P), which improves food security and livelihoods by connecting farmers to markets.

Productive Safety Nets

WFP is helping food insecure communities strengthen disaster preparedness and response, and build sustainable and effective safety nets that can meet critical food needs while combating malnutrition and even boosting local farm production. Each year, for example, WFP school meals programs feed 22 million children in 70 countries, about half of whom are girls. School meals improve the micronutrient intake of schoolchildren, leading to enhanced health, increased learning and decreased malnutrition.

Food or cash in exchange for work on infrastructure or land rehabilitation projects and establishment of other productive assets is another innovative means to improve food security in many communities. The long-term objective is to create sustainable assets that help reduce the risk of natural disasters, restore and enhance resilience of vulnerable communities and ultimately their overall food security. In **Ethiopia**, about 800,000 people in 300 crisis-prone food-insecure communities are benefiting from the WFP-initiated and government supported “**MERET**” project – Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transition. This project focuses on rehabilitating degraded lands through participation of local communities. Since 2000, MERET contributed to the rehabilitation of over 300,000 hectares of degraded land, regenerating vegetative cover to reduce the risk of drought and floods. Similarly, in **Rwanda** Food for Work projects have focused on land rehabilitation and building resilience in food insecure areas. For instance, in the community of Cyungo WFP supported 4,000 people for a year to build terraces on 240 hectares of hillsides. In Haiti, some 35,000 women and men are currently employed in those programmes. The focus is on repairing roads, improving irrigation systems, building storehouses and safeguarding against soil erosion.

Cash and Vouchers

Cash and vouchers are market-based transfer modalities allowing beneficiaries to access food assistance through functioning markets. Commodity-based vouchers can be exchanged for fixed quantities for specified foods. Value-based vouchers can be exchanged for a choice of specified foods equivalent to cash value. Cash transfers provide people with money, normally for an amount equivalent to the market value of food rations. These programmes are especially applicable when there are food and functioning markets in an area, but the food is unaffordable. There has been a growing demand for these programmes, which stimulate economies and help rebuilding even in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, such as Haiti. In **Syria**, for instance, WFP tried, for the first time, a cell phone based system delivering vouchers via text messages to beneficiaries’ phones. The ‘electronic voucher’ is then exchanged for food at selected

government food shops. This proved to be particularly effective for meeting the needs of refugees living in an urban environment and reducing beneficiary transaction costs. For 2010, the programme is being expanded to reach some 40,000 beneficiaries. A similar system is being launched in **Kenya** for some 2,500 families living in the Mathare slums of Nairobi, which is also expected to benefit local markets. Cash and voucher systems also empower food-insecure people by allowing them to make choices and prioritizing their needs.

Nutritional Interventions and New Products

WFP nutritional interventions relate to food assistance that delivers the maximum nutritional benefit through blanket and targeted supplementary feeding as well as mainstreaming of nutrition in all interventions. The objective is to deliver the right food at the right time. New products include fortified blended foods (FBFs), ready-to-use-foods (RUFs), including Plumpy Doz, Supplementary Plumpy, high energy biscuits and compressed food bars, and Micronutrient Powder (MNP). These are targeted at pregnant and lactating women, children under two years of age, moderately malnourished children under five years of age, and chronically ill (people suffering from HIV, AIDS and TB). Currently, WFP supports mother and child nutrition development interventions in 16 African, 7 Asian and 8 Latin American countries.

In **Niger**, in the face of widespread malnutrition, WFP has developed a three-pronged programme which includes blanket feeding to all children under two and Ready to Use high intensity nutritional products for children under five. In **Pakistan**, WFP is providing approximately 850,000 under two children with blanket supplementary feeding to prevent widespread malnutrition and reduce related mortality. In **Burkina Faso**, WFP supports malnourished children under the age of five as well as pregnant and lactating women through a supplementary feeding programme complemented by nutrition education and culinary demonstrations. In 2009 WFP used micronutrient powder in **Bangladesh**, **Nepal** and in **Kenya**, where evaluations found that anaemia prevalence fell by 15 percent to 50 percent when Micronutrient Powder (MNP) was used. This level of impact exceeds what could be achieved with other types of food products. In **Mauritania**, significant improvements in nutritional and food insecurity indicators have been achieved since adopting the REACH¹ nutrition coordination model in 2008.

Purchase for Progress

Purchase for Progress (P4P) builds on WFP's local food procurement programme, where we buy nearly \$1 billion of commodities from developing nations, by helping smallholder and low-income farmers connect to markets. During the five year pilot programme, launched in September 2008, P4P will test a number of different procurement and programming modalities in 21 pilot countries to learn which approaches are most effective in engaging and benefiting smallholder farmers, while preserving WFP's core mandate of reaching the hungry. Partnerships with a wide range of actors, including Government, UN Agencies, local and international NGOs, the private sector, financial institutions and academia are critical and will capacitate the farmers' organizations to be competitive players in the agricultural market place. Through this initiative, WFP expects to impact at least 500,000 smallholder farmers.

¹ REACH is a country-led approach to scale up proven and effective interventions addressing child under-nutrition through the partnership and coordinated action of UN agencies, civil society, donors, and the private sector, under the leadership of national governments.