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WFP POLICY ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disaster risk reduction activities frequently form part of WFP's work programme: food-for-work activities for example often aim to improve livelihood opportunities and make communities more resilient, while vulnerability assessments provide a good basis for disaster risk reduction work. For WFP, disaster risk reduction also means complementing emergency response and preparedness with targeted prevention and preparedness activities before disaster strikes. Guided by governments and working with partners, WFP can contribute to national disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation frameworks thanks to its disaster management competency, experience, services and deep field presence. WFP has a record of rebuilding livelihoods and reducing disaster risk at all levels, often turning the aftermath of disasters into windows of opportunity for disaster risk reduction. WFP should put its comparative advantage to work to support governments and partners.

Strategic Objective 2 in WFP's Strategic Plan (2008–2011) includes investing in disaster prevention and preparedness. This is in part a reflection of global awareness: by adopting the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Bali Action Plan, more than 180 countries agreed that reduction of disaster losses and adaptation to climate change should be priorities.

DRAFT DECISION*

The Board takes note of “WFP Policy on Disaster Risk Reduction” (WFP/EB.1/2009/5-B). The Board reaffirms its commitment to preventing hunger through disaster preparedness and other risk reduction measures by:

- strengthening capacities of governments to prepare for, assess and respond to hunger arising from disasters; and
- assisting communities to build resilience to shocks.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.



WFP AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

1. The WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2011) recognizes the need for WFP to further engage in disaster risk reduction by making it a Strategic Objective. The goals of that Strategic Objective are the following:
 - i. To support and strengthen capacities of governments to prepare for, assess and respond to acute hunger arising from disasters.
 - ii. To support and strengthen resiliency of communities to shocks through safety nets or asset creation, including adaptation to climate change.

This policy document proposes that WFP integrate the goal of disaster risk reduction into its programmes. It notes that WFP has appropriate tools and techniques through its in-house expertise and technical partners to do so.

RATIONALE FOR A DISASTER RISK REDUCTION POLICY

2. Preventing acute hunger by reducing disaster risk at the community level means identifying and fully understanding risks and translating that knowledge into preventive action. Communities that become more resilient and prepared to respond to disasters, when backed by government disaster preparedness efforts, significantly reduce disaster-related losses of life and livelihoods. In fact, studies show that resources invested in disaster risk reduction save relief and rehabilitation costs in the future.¹
3. This paper outlines WFP's overarching approach to preventing and mitigating disasters in a disaster risk reduction framework.² In 2005, more than 180 countries adopted the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), followed in 2007 by the Bali Action Plan to combat climate change. These represented a global emphasis on reducing disaster risk, leading WFP to take more concerted and coherent action to support governments' disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation efforts.
4. WFP's Strategic Objective 2 about disaster risk reduction recognizes that it is not enough to respond to shocks, rebuild livelihoods and implicitly reduce risk; WFP needs to "invest in disaster preparedness and mitigation measures" as part of its efforts to prevent acute hunger. WFP already responds well to disasters (both natural and those caused by humans) and has a history of rebuilding livelihoods and actively reducing disaster risk at all levels.³ Nonetheless, WFP needs to define its guiding principles for coherent and focused programmes addressing disaster risk reduction in varying country contexts, which

¹ In a report to the United States Congress, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Multihazard Mitigation Council stated that "On average, a dollar spent by FEMA on hazard mitigation (actions to reduce disaster losses) provides the nation about four dollars in future benefits." WFP estimates that US\$1 spent on early livelihood protection in Ethiopia generates about US\$4 in future cost savings and benefits.

² This document takes risk to mean the combination of people's exposure (vulnerability) to a hazard/shock with their means to reduce the negative consequences of the event. Reducing disaster risk both lessens human vulnerability (prevents impact) and strengthens resilience.

³ Excluding Iraq operations, over 46 percent of WFP's emergency operation (EMOP) costs between 1994 and 2003 were in response to natural disasters. In 2002, 103 out of 207 approved EMOPs were developed in response to natural disasters, representing 62 percent of emergency relief beneficiaries. In 2003, the figure was 89 out of 191 total EMOPs and 57 percent of beneficiaries.



would also help bridge the gap between relief and development. The extra dollar spent on prevention and preparedness today saves lives, livelihoods and additional effort tomorrow.

5. Throughout history natural disasters have struck all over the world, but their economic and social impacts have never been as severe as they are now, especially in the developing world.⁴ The extent of disasters and their increasing frequency and severity, due in part to climate change, mean that humanitarian needs resulting from disasters are increasing. The world also faces new types of vulnerability such as soaring food and fuel prices and the threat of pandemics. Due to demographic pressure and marginalization in many countries, the overall impact of disasters is growing, with a corresponding increase in the human, social and economic costs associated with these events.
6. Governments have the primary responsibility for sustainable development and for a consistent disaster risk reduction policy. However, given increasing global interdependence with regard to disaster reduction, in the future WFP will be relied on even more for its ability to act rapidly on information from disparate sources. WFP will engage with national policy processes and other United Nations agencies to strengthen the coherence and coordination of action on disaster risk reduction.
7. Climate change threatens already fragile food systems throughout the developing world. Because climate change is expected to lead to more frequent disasters, preventing and preparing for disasters helps communities adapt to climate change. Collective action and substantial investment in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts is required, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable communities that rely on climate-sensitive sectors and have fewest alternatives.⁵
8. WFP should continue to support governments with a toolbox for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation that includes vulnerability analysis and mapping, emergency needs and response assessments and multi-hazard early-warning systems. These tools, combined with knowledge transfer, can help strengthen governments' capacity in disaster preparedness and response.⁶ Food-for-training (FFT) activities can serve as prevention tools since they train community leaders and women representatives on committees to build a culture of safety and resilience. Likewise, voucher schemes and cash-based transfers may also be used in preparedness programmes. Tools for weather risk transfer protect livelihoods by facilitating timely support and thereby limiting the

⁴ In 2006, the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) estimated that 1.6 billion people were at risk in the 1980s and 2.6 billion in the 1990s (IEG. 2006. *Hazards of Nature, Risks to Development*. Washington, DC.). According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), "In recent decades, the number of reported hydrological disasters has increased by 7.4 percent per year on average. Furthermore, we have witnessed a strengthening of the upward trend in recent years, with an average annual growth rate of 8.4 percent in the 2000 to 2007 period." Hydro-meteorological disasters affected over 177 million people and killed 8,859. Although the human impacts were essentially concentrated in Asia, all the regions experienced some major hydro-meteorological events. (CRED. 2008. *Annual Disaster Statistical Review: The Numbers and Trends 2007*. Brussels.)

⁵ "Current trends are consistent with the predictions of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, in that drought-affected areas will likely increase in extent. Heavy precipitation events, which are very likely to increase in frequency, will augment flood risk..." IPCC. 2007. Summary for Policymakers. In M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, eds. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press, pp. 7–22.

⁶ For example, WFP supports the African Union in building continental networks for livelihood risk analysis, vulnerability mapping and food security monitoring, with an emphasis on tracking the impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity.



economic damage of disasters.⁷ WFP's contingency planning is a critical tool at the country level for government preparedness, and extends to the global level in such areas as avian and human influenza (AHI).⁸

WFP Experience

9. Many WFP emergency recovery operations include disaster risk reduction elements. Following the November 2007 floods in Bangladesh, part of the recovery plan consisted of raising houses so they would be protected during floods. In Tajikistan's operation following the 2006 earthquake, WFP helped build safer houses. In Rwanda following the war, in 1994 WFP and partners supported resettlement of refugees and displaced people in a protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) that included extensive food-for-work activities in land terracing, prevention of soil erosion, tree planting and conservation farming, aimed to improve stability and food security by reducing the risk of environmental degradation
10. In Chad, WFP has constructed water catchments, dug wells and rehabilitated dams. In Sierra Leone, WFP has rehabilitated inland swamps and tree crop plantations. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch (OMEP) is WFP's focal point for emergency preparedness and response activities.
11. WFP has also targeted disaster risk reduction in development projects. Many food-for-asset projects have helped rehabilitate and protect community-level land and infrastructure. Food-for-work projects for watershed management minimize the impact of low rainfall or establish and maintain feeder roads to ensure all-weather access to villages. In Mauritania, WFP used food-based projects to support livelihood diversification.
12. WFP has often included food-for-asset activities that directly reduce risks for communities. The Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transitions to More Sustainable Livelihoods (MERET) project in Ethiopia targets food-insecure communities in degraded fragile ecosystems prone to weather-related food crises. The project uses food as an incentive for labour to regenerate vegetative cover, which increases soil water capture and helps reduce the risk of drought and flooding. A WFP Special Operation in the Latin America and Caribbean region builds government emergency preparedness and response capacity.
13. An important example of WFP's risk reduction work was its response to the threat posed by food and fuel price increases to people's livelihoods and nutritional status. WFP has launched preventive action on the demand side, such as scaling up safety nets (as cash, food and vouchers) and school feeding programmes. WFP will further support rural livelihoods through smallholder procurement programmes. These actions are guided by the disaster risk reduction policy principles of government ownership, United Nations country team (UNCT) endorsement and partnerships.

⁷ See Hess, U. and Im, S.Y. 2007. Saving Livelihoods through Weather Risk Management: The Role of Insurance and Financial Markets – A Case Study of Ethiopia. *Jour. of Rural Dev.*, 40(1): 21–30.

⁸ WFP seconded preparedness officers to the United Nations System Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC) to draft the Pandemic Planning and Preparedness Guidelines for the United Nations system, which guide United Nations country teams for operating in a pandemic environment. The process engaged United Nations actors and partners such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), non-governmental organizations and the private sector in developing plans to ensure preparedness at both the national and community levels.



Comparative Advantage

14. WFP's comparative advantage for prevention and preparedness work to reduce acute hunger and loss of lives and livelihoods in disasters derives from its operational nature, field presence, competency in disaster management. Its field presence provides it with thorough local knowledge. This local knowledge, along with vulnerability analysis, strong needs assessments and capacity in emergency preparedness and response, give WFP credibility with governments at various levels. WFP is a leader among United Nations agencies in the fields of early warning, early impact analysis and crisis management for both natural and human-induced disasters. This leadership is further enhanced by its strong involvement with communities through safety-net projects and food-for-asset projects.

POLICY FRAMEWORK⁹

15. WFP's overarching approach to the reduction of disaster risk is based on the goals of Strategic Objective 2 discussed above, and three sets of tasks: i) to identify and ensure understanding of risk; ii) to prevent disasters by lowering risk; and iii) to prepare for disasters. WFP focuses on reducing those disaster risks that are likely to result in acute hunger.

Expected Outcomes and Impacts

16. In the long term, all prevention and preparedness efforts aim to substantially reduce loss of life and damage to the assets of communities and countries.¹⁰
17. In the medium term, this policy aims at the following outcomes of disaster risk reduction programmes:
- Hazard risks are identified and understood at all levels of government and within communities.
 - Governments are prepared to respond to disasters.
 - Communities and the country in general are resilient to shocks and are prepared to respond to disasters.

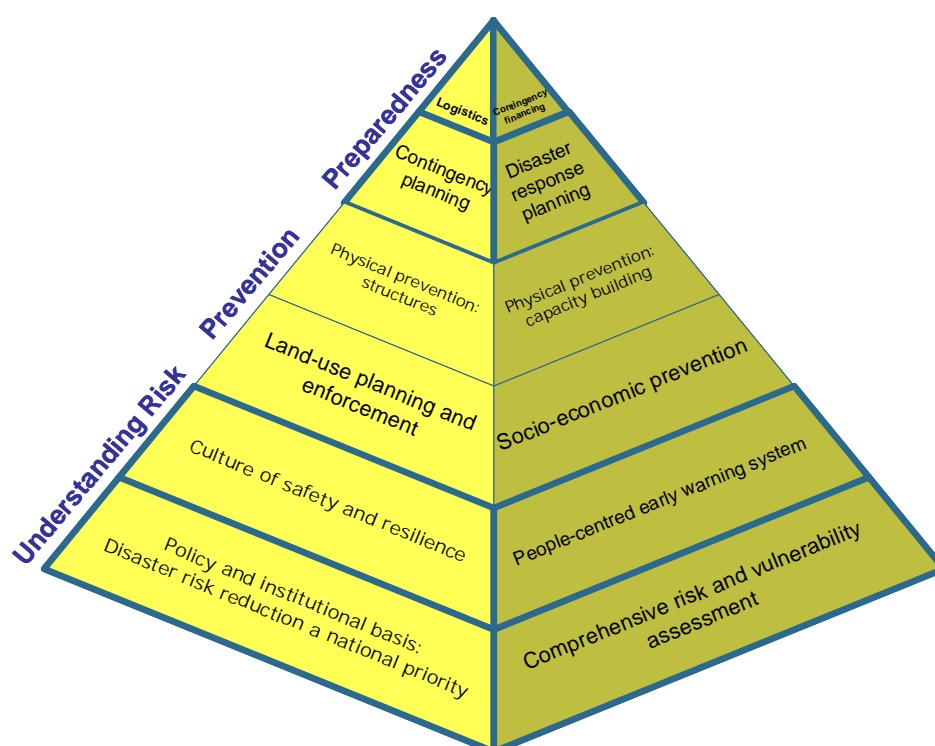
These outcomes are related to risk identification, prevention and preparedness at government and community levels. Figure 1 illustrates the activities that are generally part of a comprehensive disaster risk reduction framework.

⁹ This section builds on case studies conducted in five countries (Bangladesh, Burundi, Haiti, Mozambique and Tajikistan) and on "Policy Guidance Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction: Strengthening WFP's Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity in Compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015", funded by the Swedish Government, which is available at: <http://epmaps.wfp.org/temp/drrpolicyguidance.zip>.

¹⁰ Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015, p. 3



Figure 1: Risk Identification, Prevention and Preparedness



18. Full understanding of risk means that assessment findings are shared, discussed, understood and agreed among all stakeholders, and fed into community disaster planning. Government preparedness implies defined, agreed, coordinated and adequately funded structures, roles and mandates for government and non-government actors in disaster management at all levels. It includes community-based and people-centred early warning systems. Community resilience is the capacity to: i) absorb stress or destructive forces through resistance or adaptation; ii) manage or maintain certain basic functions and structures during disastrous events; and iii) recover or “bounce back” after an event.
19. Comprehensive disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation have an impact on households by reducing household vulnerability and food insecurity. Reliable livelihood asset protection can encourage households to engage in activities that build profits rather than engage only in low-risk, low-profit livelihood strategies that reinforce inherited patterns of chronic poverty. Combined with access to markets, such livelihood asset protection can, therefore, generate development opportunities, build food security, and generate new incomes.¹¹ In addition, more protected households tend not to pull children

¹¹ “The theory of poverty traps makes clear, households facing otherwise identical initial conditions may follow different accumulation trajectories if one enjoys better capital or insurance access than the other.” Carter, M.R. and Barrett, C.B. 2006. *The Economics of Poverty Traps and Persistent Poverty: An Asset-Based Approach*. *Jour. of Dev. Studies*, 42(2): 178–99.

out of school to work.¹² In general, resilient households engage in better caring practices and are able to better protect physical and human capital.¹³

Partnerships

20. Government ownership is paramount to successful disaster prevention. National and local governments and communities are the main actors in – and have the primary responsibility for – disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Moreover, national governments have often developed tools and policies that are country-specific and are, consequently, the best institutional and operational home for prevention and mitigation. WFP's role is to support governments in the identification and the filling of gaps to make their activities more effective.
21. Given that disasters do not respect national boundaries and may affect several countries in a region, there is a need for regional information-sharing and coordination.¹⁴
22. The success of the integration of prevention and preparedness into WFP's work will depend not only on WFP's own capacity, but also on the extent to which WFP works in partnership with others – national governments, regional entities, non-governmental organizations, other United Nations organizations and the private sector¹⁵ – to share information, conduct joint research, maintain integrated databases and carry out joint planning and programming.
23. Important partners include:
 - *The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Secretariat.* An initiative of United Nations and non-United Nations stakeholders, including the World Bank, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO),¹⁶ the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the United Nations Environment Programme and the ProVention Consortium. The ISDR's main objectives are to: i) increase public awareness; ii) understand risk, vulnerability and disaster reduction globally; and iii) obtain commitment from public authorities to implement disaster reduction policies and actions. In 2008, ISDR, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and WFP jointly launched a global drought risk reduction network.
 - *The World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).* Work together to build bridges between development and humanitarian players to reduce risk across programmes.

¹² For evidence on households in villages in southern India sending their children to work instead of school to supplement income after adverse shocks, see Jacoby, H. and Skoufias, E. 1997. Risk, Financial Markets, and Human Capital in a Developing Country. *Review of Econ. Studies*, 64(3): 311–35.

¹³ For evidence of children's growth being affected during and after severe flooding in Bangladesh in 1988, see Foster, A.D. 1995. Prices, Credit Markets, and Child Growth in Low-Income Rural Areas. *Econ. Jour.*, 105(430): 551–70.

¹⁴ An example of cross-border effects is flooding in Bangladesh following heavy rainfall in the watershed area upstream on the Ganges River in India.

¹⁵ An example is the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), with operations planned in 51 countries.

¹⁶ WFP cooperates with the WMO to upgrade national weather services, paving the way for weather risk management services.



- *The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)*, managed by the World Bank and ISDR. Allocated funds to WFP's Ethiopian risk management work.
- *The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*. Its Disaster Risk Management Working Group links its technical and operational units to increase its effectiveness in preparedness and response. FAO and WFP have largely complementary mandates for disaster risk management.
- *The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*. Through its Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, works to mainstream disaster risk reduction into development programmes at the country level.
- *The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)*. Strong partnership with WFP based on joint child hunger work.
- *The ProVention Consortium*. A global coalition of international organizations, governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and academic institutions, dedicated to increasing the safety of vulnerable communities and reducing the impacts of disasters in developing countries.
- *FEWS NET (Famine Early Warning Systems Network) and United States Geological Survey (USGS)*. Global leaders in early warning technologies.
- *World Meteorological Organization*. An important source for all meteorological data and climate science tools.
- *IFRC and major international NGOs*. Interlocutors for concepts and practice of disaster risk reduction.

The private sector and academia also provide useful technical input. WFP is working with partners to strengthen its technical capacities through new technologies.¹⁷ WFP will put these partnerships into practice through Memoranda of Understanding and joint programmes focusing on certain activities and countries.

24. On the ground, WFP needs to fit into prevention and mitigation frameworks and find strong technical partners. Technical support for the correct implementation of work is critical. A lesson learned from previous WFP disaster prevention projects is that poor project design, lack of technical rigour and weak partnerships with specialized players can jeopardize a project's success. Technical support offers a solution to these problems. This is true of engineering works in particular, but it also applies to simple community-based asset-generating programmes that need to be anchored in community practice and implemented under internationally recognized engineering standards.

Guiding Principles

25. WFP's role in disaster risk reduction is guided by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). At country level, disaster risk reduction is guided by the United Nations Development Assistance

¹⁷ WFP, the *Politecnico di Torino* and the *Istituto Superiore sui Sistemi Territoriali per l'Innovazione* (Higher Institute on Innovation Territorial Systems (Si.T.I.) have formed a partnership to create ITHACA (Information Technology for Humanitarian Assistance, Cooperation and Action) to improve WFP's efficiency in emergency preparedness and response through applied technology and services, especially for natural disasters. WFP also collaborates with the International Research Institute for Climate and Society in the area of climate risk management.



Framework (UNDAF), along with recovery and humanitarian assistance frameworks.¹⁸ WFP participated in drafting the IASC Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters (June 2006), while an IASC working group worked on guidelines on good disaster risk reduction principles in emergencies. Common country assessments and the UNDAF support governments in reducing vulnerability to disasters.

26. Development activities and periodic emergency interventions need to form part of a programming continuum. In countries that experience recurrent natural disasters, disaster prevention and preparedness and response to early warnings should be mainstreamed into protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs), development projects, country programmes, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy outlines.
27. WFP's prevention interventions should target households whose coping capacity would be insufficient to meet their food needs in the face of a disaster and would erode vital livelihood assets. Vulnerability and response mechanisms of groups potentially affected by disasters vary and depend on their local resource base, livelihood structures, coping strategies, cultural values and traditions. Participatory approaches can improve targeting and create ownership.
28. Gender relations play an important role in disaster mitigation strategies. Men and women often develop different coping strategies in the face of repeated natural disasters. The larger the poverty gap and the cultural constraints on women's activities, the greater the losses of life and property women may suffer. WFP's gender policy calls for a participatory approach to ensure women are equally represented in activities.
29. Local monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems should be set up at the project outset, based on a logical framework, and used to make programme adjustments to improve outcomes. M&E systems are the basis for demonstrating cost-efficiency, one of the four expected outcomes of prevention.

Designing a Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction Country Portfolio

⇒ 1. *Understanding risk*

30. The first of three building blocks for designing a disaster risk reduction programme at the country office level is to identify the risks and guarantee people understand their implications. This involves conducting comprehensive risk assessments, strengthening early warning systems, developing an institutional and policy basis for disaster risk reduction, and promoting a culture of safety and resilience.
31. In this area, WFP can aid governments in risk reduction through:
 - *The undertaking of comprehensive risk and vulnerability assessments and analysis.* WFP's food security analysis units can assess the vulnerability of a population and evaluate the consequences of a possible shock on its food security in general. Analysis takes place at the household level and captures gender differences.
 - *The assessment of the capacities and further strengthening of early warning systems.* People-centred early warning systems and more targeted food security monitoring systems, along with good communication and dissemination mechanisms, translate early warning into early action.

¹⁸ Background document on disaster risk reduction strategies for the January 2008 Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and WFP. The document also calls for WFP to mainstream disaster risk reduction and comply with the Hyogo Framework for Action.



32. WFP can also play a supportive role for:

- *Government efforts to establish a national prevention and mitigation policy.* This policy should be based on a thorough analysis of disaster-related risks and the potential costs and benefits of reducing those risks, particularly for poor people who are food-insecure or most vulnerable to disasters. This would support decision-making, lessen duplication of efforts and clarify responsibilities.¹⁹
- *The building of a culture of safety and resilience at all levels of the society in which disaster risk reduction is understood to be every citizen's responsibility.* This task involves extensive multi-stakeholder work, consensus building, and political competencies in order to achieve more risk-awareness. Additionally, this task needs to be integrated into national and provincial-level agendas and policies. WFP programmes, including school feeding programmes, can become platforms for supporting governments and partners to build and nurture a culture of safety and resilience.

⇒ 2. *Prevention*

33. Prevention aims to avoid damage by reducing vulnerability. Prevention includes measures that guard against future shocks. These include food-based safety nets and food-for-assets programmes that serve as livelihood protection mechanisms. Relevant food-for-assets activities might include building dykes or extensive tree-planting to reduce the likelihood of flooding and landslides caused by heavy rainfall.

34. Prevention of the effects caused by natural disasters can be divided into three categories: i) socio-economic prevention; ii) physical prevention; and iii) land-use planning. In pre-disaster settings, WFP will carry out prevention operations through food-for-assets programmes (using natural resources management like tree planting or irrigation) and targeted expertise. In post-disaster settings, WFP's relief actions will incorporate prevention activities.²⁰ In fact, disasters open windows of opportunity for prevention work by raising people's risk awareness.

35. Socio-economic prevention establishes mechanisms for increasing the resilience of the poor and most vulnerable to disasters by providing new and more diversified income-generating activities, often promoting livelihoods diversification.²¹ These mechanisms need to be included in a country's poverty reduction strategy process.

¹⁹ The ISDR asked WFP to co-lead a drought risk reduction network. WFP and ISDR then presented the concept at the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development in New York in May 2008.

²⁰ Such as "rebuilding better" by applying shock-resistant building standards.

²¹ At what levels of risk should physical prevention of disasters stop and risk transfer and preparedness actions begin? For an illuminating analysis of risk and resilience in relation to index insurance see "Livelihood Cost-Benefit Analysis of Drought Index Insurance under a Changing Climate in Northern India, DFID Risk to Resilience Project. Hochrainer, S., Kull, D., Mechler, R. and Patnaik, U. Assessing the costs and benefits of financial drought risk management in Uttar Pradesh, India. In P. Sum (ed). *Managing Drought Risk*. ISDR (forthcoming). They argue that "an integrated irrigation plus insurance package is economically most efficient whereby irrigation addresses the more frequent drought events and weather insurance the least frequent".



Box 1: WFP's role in confronting the food and fuel price crisis

High food prices have serious negative effects on vulnerable households living in low-income and crisis-prone countries. The impact on the nutritional and health status of populations may jeopardize the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The most vulnerable households are likely to slide further into poverty and destitution. In this context, women-headed households, marginal farmers, the urban poor and pastoralists will be the most affected.

Price increases have occurred in a context of an increasingly erratic climate. This multi-faceted crisis extended rapidly, putting more strain on populations that have limited resilience to shocks and where the impact could last for a long time. WFP's response to the situation has included:

1. taking immediate steps to meet urgent needs, prevent malnutrition and stabilize the food security situation;
2. supporting medium-term measures to boost agricultural production; and
3. fostering longer-term efforts to build a more conducive policy environment for pro-poor growth.

Government ownership of the response to the situation is vital. WFP has supported governments through activities including:

1. assessment and analysis of the evolving situation;
2. adjustment of existing programmes;
3. monitoring and urban area interventions;
4. advising on policy issues to address problems of food availability and access;
5. provision of technical assistance upon request; and
6. advocacy for funding and a collective response with partners.

WFP both responds to the immediate needs of the food insecure vulnerable population, and is part of a broader country-level and global action that supports adequate local supply responses. Partnerships are critical for assessing and responding to the crisis of high prices.

36. The following are not part of WFP's core activities, but are necessary parts of a disaster risk reduction framework; when people are at risk of disaster-induced hunger WFP can support them:

- *Physical prevention, including contributing to projects that build new infrastructure and protect existing critical facilities.* Examples of prevention activities include constructing rural infrastructure to limit the damage of flood water, slow the advance of desertification or reduce losses from hurricanes. WFP could support these with capacity building, cash or voucher programmes, food-for-asset or food-for-work activities.
- *The incorporation of disaster risk reduction into urban and rural development and land-use planning, and the strengthening of enforcement mechanisms.* This entails incorporating hazard and vulnerability parameters into land-use planning and regulations such as zoning and building codes. Priorities might include finding



alternatives to informal urban settlements, and proper location of critical facilities and infrastructures.

**Box 2: WFP prevention experience in a pre-disaster setting:
Bangladesh – comprehensive risk mitigation and preparedness**

Bangladesh is prone to floods, droughts and cyclones. In Rajbari, a small village on the western bank of the Ganges River, villagers used to regularly abandon their houses and lose cattle and other assets when the river flooded. In early 2006, the Government, community and WFP jointly started a project whereby villagers received food and cash from the Government in exchange for work to raise houses to the tops of small, solid hills, where they are not affected by floods. Owners of such homes are considered more credit-worthy and receive loans more easily. In response to the newly acquired skills, 25 women from Rajbari now implement house raising works in other villages for a fee.

Donors in Bangladesh agreed that WFP was the best organization to coordinate disaster mitigation and preparedness activities, based on WFP's leading role in the Disaster and Emergency Response Group and its chairing of the United Nations Disaster Management Team. The WFP country office, through its disaster risk reduction unit, has developed and implemented a comprehensive prevention and mitigation approach and set of activities. Due to a risk assessment done in collaboration with partners, the country office is now well prepared for major emergencies and geographical targeting is based in part on the findings of risk assessments conducted in the districts where disaster mitigation projects were implemented. WFP has also carried out additional mitigation work in disaster-prone areas.

⇒ 3. *Preparedness*

37. In times of disaster, impacts and losses can be substantially reduced if authorities, communities and individuals in hazard-prone areas are well prepared and ready to act, and equipped with the knowledge and capacities needed for effective disaster management. This requires a common understanding of best practices regarding disaster preparedness, especially at the community level, but ideally at national and even regional levels. Under government leadership, WFP can work within the United Nations country team in:

- i. *Strengthening of planning and programming for disaster preparedness at country level.* The agreement between stakeholders on coordination of actions and lines of responsibility before a crisis unfolds is crucial. This means better communication with donors and national governments, particularly in the early phases of a crisis.²² Disaster response activities have to be planned ahead of time and put into effect.
- ii. *Logistical preparation, including pre-positioning of stocks and personnel and rapid needs assessments in the immediate aftermath of a disaster.* The United Nations Humanitarian Response Depots (UNHRDs) and the United Nations logistics cluster underpin global efforts to enhance logistics capacity to respond to disasters. WFP hosts the United Nations Joint Logistics Centre (UNJLC) and the Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency Support

²² Mali's Cereals Market Restructuring Programme offers a model of how donors, government and WFP can work together with a national early warning system to coordinate food assistance.



Team (FITTEST), which provide rapid intervention in emergencies and support to large-scale humanitarian operations delivering comprehensive information, telecommunications and electricity services.

- iii. *The planning of contingency as a strategic and operational process to link early warning information with early action, with the use of scenarios.* WFP has a framework for contingency planning and technical and coordination mechanisms within the Programme, but in many countries adequate contingency plans for mitigation of disasters do not exist. WFP and partners would initiate contingency and operational plans in disaster-prone countries to strengthen mitigation objectives in country strategies and link early response to early warning through ongoing development activities.²³
- iv. *Contingency funding at the micro and macro levels.* Contingency funding and risk transfer at micro level involves the development and support of insurance-like instruments that enhance certainty, adequacy and timeliness of disaster compensation, transferring risk away from the beneficiary to public or private risk-takers.²⁴ A safety net or safety net scale-up can also be used to transfer risk to governments and insurance markets, respectively.²⁵ In some cases, beneficiaries “pay” for compensation ex-post through their labour in public work programmes.²⁶ WFP can support governments and the private sector with the development of tools for weather risk transfer. At macro level contingency funding brings together international donors with reinsurance companies and other capital market players to transfer risks from a particular country. The indexing of weather risks and the pricing of transfers facilitate the comparison of the costs of risk reduction versus disaster response. It also allows for the clear identification of financial trade-offs and the demonstration of the most efficient use of funds.²⁷

²³ Regional contingency planning is required when an emergency is caused by a neighbouring country. For example, 1998 floods in Bangladesh were caused in part by excessive rains on denuded hills in the Himalayas of India. WFP did a regional contingency planning exercise in southern Africa for the 1997 El Niño. WFP’s decentralization and clustering of country offices by regions lends itself well to regional planning. However, even in areas with a regional institution, there are often difficulties in designing a common approach to disaster prevention and response due to differences in national policies and priorities, and institutional capacity levels.

²⁴ See *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*, pp. 89ff. Also Hess, U. and Portegies, M. 2008. *Catastrophe Relief Voucher Scheme in Managing Drought Risk*. Geneva, ISDR (forthcoming). IFAD and WFP jointly research: i) micro-level flood- and drought-risk transfer instruments in China; and ii) sustainability and scalability of weather risk management, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

²⁵ See Alderman, H. and Haque, T. 2006. Countercyclical safety nets for the poor and vulnerable. *Food Policy*, 31: 372–383; and Barnett, B.J., Barrett, C.B. and Skees, J.R. Poverty traps and index-based risk transfer products. *World Development* 36(10): 1766–85.

²⁶ See ISDR. 2004. *Living with Risk: A Global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives*, which argues that public works programmes are to be carried out when people have more time, such as during post-harvest periods.

²⁷ See ISDR. 2007. *Drought Risk Reduction Framework and Practices*, p. 35.



Box 3: WFP disaster prevention experience in a post-disaster setting: Tajikistan

Tajikistan is prone to flash floods, avalanches, mudslides and earthquakes. In the aftermath of an emergency intervention in the country, WFP shifted its focus to development and disaster prevention projects, helping communities rebuild houses according to earthquake-proof building standards. In Dusti, southern Tajikistan, WFP and the NGO Habitat for Humanity rebuilt homes destroyed by the 2006 earthquake through a food-for-work project. In this project, Habitat for Humanity provided technical assistance and materials, while WFP provided the food rations. The project resulted in earthquake proof housing and demonstrated the effects of more efficient construction techniques. After the project, the community designed a follow-up project to earthquake-proof existing houses and requested WFP support.

In Ayni, WFP, UNDP and the local Ministry of Works Bureau supported a project to protect a channel that carried the village's main source of irrigation water from recurrent annual floods. The entire community was involved in the construction of 3.5 kilometres (km) of bank protection made of rocks and concrete that protects the village houses from spring flash-floods. The community also channelled water and improved the irrigation system for income-generation purposes and to power the community mill with water. Two additional kilometres of irrigation work are planned for 2009 to protect the upper part of the river.

Preparing disaster risk reduction approaches

38. WFP will contribute to disaster risk reduction frameworks. Some countries do not have frameworks in place, while certain communities in these countries have important lessons to share.²⁸ WFP's contribution, however, will be based on the country's readiness for this type of intervention. Readiness depends on the level of the country's institutions and governance and its recent shock history. Weak systems and lack of memory of the impact of shocks decrease a country's readiness for this type of programme. On the other hand, high levels of institutional development create an enabling environment, and a recent major disaster creates a window of opportunity for prevention and preparedness. These two factors combined result in a high level of country readiness. Potential approaches to be used, taking into consideration a country's readiness and the results of gap and needs analysis, are:

- i. *Community-based.* This approach focuses on the most vulnerable communities in the most vulnerable areas and strives to achieve demonstration effects. If there are



²⁸ Five levels of community resilience can be identified: 1) Little awareness of the issue(s) or motivation to address them. Actions limited to crisis response. 2) Awareness of the issue(s) and willingness to address them. Capacity to act (knowledge and skills, human, material and other resources) remains limited. Interventions tend to be one-off, piecemeal and short-term. 3) Development and implementation of solutions. Capacity to act is improved and substantial. Interventions are more numerous and long term. 4) Coherence and integration. Interventions are extensive, covering all main aspects of the problem, and they are linked within a coherent long-term strategy. 5) A "culture of safety" exists among all stakeholders, where prevention and mitigation is embedded in all relevant policy, planning, practice, attitudes and behaviour. (Twigg, J. 2007. *Characteristics of a disaster-resilient community: A guidance note*, Version 1 (for field testing). London, Department for International Development (UK) Disaster Risk Reduction Interagency Coordination Group.)



- implementation capacity constraints, the government, WFP and partners select a few tasks and address only the greatest risks.
- ii. *Country-wide*. This approach includes the main tasks of risk identification, prevention and preparedness. Important factors are government ownership and accountability, post-disaster awareness and readiness for prevention efforts (“window of opportunity”).
 - iii. *Full-fledged risk identification, prevention and preparedness framework with private-sector participation*. This approach also includes disaster risk transfer at household level (disaster insurance, crop insurance, targeted compensation schemes) and macro-level weather risk transfer. Interventions focus on technical assistance and capacity-building for government.
39. The relative importance of risk identification, prevention and preparedness and WFP’s role will vary in accordance to the country environment. WFP’s strong role in relief is crucial to seize the post-disaster “window of opportunity”, characterized by a heightened awareness of the need for prevention and preparedness and greater access to funding for these activities. WFP needs to grasp the opportunity to integrate prevention into its relief and recovery programmes and, where possible, needs to work through existing programmes as entry points.
40. WFP’s role can be pivotal, supportive or even very limited according to whether work is being undertaken before or after a disaster, the type of activity, WFP’s experience and its competency levels. Also, the tools WFP could use vary considerably. A rough overview by disaster risk reduction activity is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: WFP's role and tools in disaster risk reduction

Disaster risk reduction activity	Role for WFP	WFP TOOLS											
		Capacity development	Cash/vouchers	Food for training	Food for work/assets	Maternal & child health & nutrition	School feeding (FFE)	Special operations activities	Therapeutic feeding	Vulnerability assessments	Weather risk transfer tools	Early warning systems	Market interventions
UNDERSTANDING RISK People-centred early warning system Comprehensive risk and vulnerability assessment Culture of safety and resilience at all levels Policy and Institutional basis: Disaster risk reduction a national priority	Core role	✓								✓		✓	
	Core role									✓		✓	
	Limited/supporting role	✓	✓	✓			✓						
	Limited/supporting role	✓	✓										
PREVENTION Physical prevention Land-use planning and enforcement Socio-economic prevention	Limited/supporting role		✓	✓	✓			✓					
	No role												
	Core role	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓
PREPAREDNESS Contingency funding Contingency and disaster planning Logistical preparedness	Limited/supporting role	✓									✓	✓	
	Core role	✓	✓							✓		✓	
	Core role	✓			✓								

LEGEND
 Most appropriate Tool 
 Supporting tools 

LINKAGES WITH OTHER STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

41. Prevention and preparedness frameworks also need to be integrated into WFP's Strategic Objective 1, "Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies". Strong prevention and preparedness serve that objective by reducing needs caused by emergencies, which makes adequate, rapid responses more likely.
42. Prevention and preparedness are closely linked to Strategic Objective 3, "Restore and rebuild lives and livelihoods in post-conflict, post-disaster or transition situations". The recovery phase after a disaster aims to bring livelihoods back to their pre-disaster level; disaster risk reduction is complementary to that aim. Prevention and mitigation leads to the building of more sustainable and shock-proof livelihoods.
43. Strategic Objective 4, "Reduce chronic hunger and undernutrition", is key to socio-economic prevention because it reduces a community's exposure to disasters. Prevention generates more resilient households that achieve their economic potential and, therefore, attain higher food security levels. Well-nourished people are less prone to lose their lives and livelihoods in disaster situations.
44. Strategic Objective 5, "Strengthen the capacities of countries to reduce hunger..." is essential for the success of a disaster risk reduction framework and for the achievement of the overarching goal of reducing disaster losses. In particular, Strategic Objective 5 activities help governments be better prepared for disasters. WFP's smallholder procurement initiatives will provide the basis for increased incomes and asset-building, making households more resilient.



45. This policy document builds upon WFP's Safety Net Policy of 2004, which sets out how WFP can better identify, design and implement food assistance programmes as part of a national social protection strategy.
46. WFP's cash and voucher policy proposes a very useful tool for the prevention framework described here. Cash-for-work (CFW) and cash-for-assets (CFA) programmes enable stronger participation in prevention and mitigation activities.
47. WFP's draft Gender Policy and Strategy is relevant for prevention and mitigation as it establishes new programme priorities for women that guide WFP's work and its advocacy efforts with national partners.
48. WFP's policy on urban interventions feeds into prevention and mitigation policy. In urban settings, targeting, monitoring and safety measures can be less than perfect; however, urban interventions are often justified by the large number of vulnerable people reached.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WFP

WFP Programming Focus

49. The support of a country disaster risk reduction framework (rather than the reaction to a shock to save lives) requires a shift in thinking within the humanitarian community. Pre-disaster work needs performance indicators that go beyond food delivery targets. WFP in particular can build on substantial in-house experience and competencies in the realm of disaster risk reduction to improve its programmes. This requires an enhanced role in the poverty reduction strategy process. Mainstreaming prevention and preparedness entails new ways of defining and rewarding project success. New expected outcomes require new targets and new monitoring frameworks.

Funding

50. In reviewing its financial framework, WFP will work to ensure that appropriate mechanisms exist for funding disaster risk reduction activities, because they require an alternative financing mechanism in addition to the tonnage-based financing currently used by WFP. There are cases of donors making specific allocations for such activities outside WFP's traditional humanitarian or development channels. WFP will explore avenues for such funding with donors and host governments, particularly in support of the lead role of national governments in the area of capacity-building.

Programme Design

51. WFP will review its programme guidance in order to consider how to integrate pre-disaster work into its operations and programmes and intervene earlier to prevent acute hunger.
52. Food-for-work, food-for-assets, cash-for-work or capacity-building activities with a disaster risk reduction objective should be implemented with strong technical support and clear guidance on how to select activities and ensure minimum standards in their design, execution, monitoring and evaluation. Experience shows that successful prevention and



preparedness projects have strong technical partners.²⁹ A revision of food-for-work and cash-for-work guidelines, along with quality controls at all project stages, will help with good practices at country level.

53. Existing WFP tools can, to some extent; address disaster risk reduction activities (see Table 1 above). However, these tools often support programmes rather than leading them. Disaster risk reduction also requires capacity development and knowledge transfer, areas in which WFP has much to offer – but to do so might require adjustment of its current operational tools.

Staffing

54. Programme officers with skills in disaster prevention and mitigation should be posted in selected country offices. These should be supported by disaster risk reduction knowledge and experience in Headquarters and regional bureaux.

²⁹ Examples of such projects include the MERET project in Ethiopia, food-for-work activities in Burundi and a joint International Labour Organization/WFP project in Haiti.



ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CFA	cash for assets
CFW	cash for work
CRED	Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FFT	food for training
FITTEST	Fast Information Technology and Telecommunications Emergency Support Team
GFDRR	Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MERET	Managing Environmental Resources to Enable Transitions to More Sustainable Livelihoods
OMEP	Emergency Preparedness and Response Branch
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHRD	United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNJLC	United Nations Joint Logistics Centre
USGS	United States Geological Survey
WMO	World Meteorological Organization