



Synthesis Report of the Joint WFP and UNHCR Impact Evaluations on the Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations

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PALMOLEIN OIL
FORTIFIED WITH VITAMIN A AND D
GIFT OF AUSTRALIA
WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME



executive summary

Background

This is a synthesis of the main findings and common lessons emerging from a series of mixed-method impact evaluations assessing the contribution of food assistance to durable solutions in protracted refugee situations. The evaluations, conducted jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through 2011–2012 in Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia and Rwanda, tested the validity of an intervention logic derived from UNHCR and WFP policies and programme guidance, which posited that the two agencies' combined work would contribute to increased self-reliance over three stages following refugee arrival.

Results

➔ Food security and nutrition

Unacceptably high numbers of refugee households remained food-insecure, especially in the second half of the period between food distributions. Women were more food-insecure than men, often because they had more dependants. Rates of chronic malnutrition reached or exceeded the high severity threshold in all four contexts, and anaemia prevalence was high, but similar to national rates.

Global acute malnutrition rates ranged from acceptable to serious, and were higher in Bangladesh. Trends were mixed, but rates were better among refugees than among the host population in all four contexts, suggesting that food assistance had a positive impact. Severe acute malnutrition rates were also mixed.

In some programmes, funding shortfalls, pipeline breaks and irregular updating of refugee registers resulted in general food distribution (GFD) rations being less than the 2,100 kcal per day standard and deficient in proteins and micronutrients.

➔ Livelihoods

Livelihood options for refugees were very limited and livelihood support was generally weak. Refugees did not have access to formal labour markets, except in Rwanda, or adequate land for agriculture, except in Chad. As a result, the most common type of work for refugees was unskilled day labour in poor conditions, competing with local populations.

The main source of refugee income and collateral was food rations and non-food items, which were sold and exchanged primarily to meet unmet basic needs, such as clothing, and to pay for milling, health services and school expenses. Women were generally the managers of household food supplies and bore the burden and risks of indebtedness. However, except in Rwanda, women's participation in camp committees remained limited.

In all four contexts, women's livelihood activities were especially precarious and often exposed them to risk. Many women and adolescent girls relied on activities such as collecting fuelwood, begging and domestic service; transactional and survival sex were common.

Protection and gender

Refugees generally reported feeling safer inside camps, but protection issues were also reported inside the camps in all four contexts. Women were more vulnerable in all cases, because of both their search for livelihood opportunities and domestic violence. In food-insecure households, girls were sometimes forced into early marriages and women into unwanted marriages.

The evaluations indicated considerable variation in the provision of protection support, with protection interventions against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) tending to be reactive and failing to address the root causes, as perceived by refugee women and girls.

The evaluations presented a mixed picture of relations between refugees and host populations. In no context was the relationship purely antagonistic or purely harmonious, although it tended to be better where there was cultural affinity. The presence of refugees – trading in local markets and drawing in additional infrastructure and basic services – was usually welcomed. Conflict typically occurred when food assistance to refugees was perceived as ignoring the needs of local poor people and/or when refugees competed with local people for labour and scarce natural resources. UNHCR/WFP engagement with host communities was very limited and opportunities for synergies were being missed.

Factors Influencing the Results

Two common key contextual factors stood out: donor funding policies and host government policies. Long-term support for protracted refugees fits uneasily with conventional donor funding modalities, which differentiate between humanitarian and development assistance. This resulted in serious funding shortfalls and inadequate support for progress towards self-reliance. Mobility and access to job markets are essential for prospects for self-reliance. In all four contexts, host governments did not permit formal integration of refugees, insufficient land was made available and mobility was restricted.

The most prominent factors influencing the results that are within WFP's control were inaccurate refugee household records and infrequent revalidation; insufficiently frequent and poorly timed distributions of non-food items; inadequate monitoring of food distributions; poor follow-up to joint assessment missions and weak joint plans of action; and missed opportunities for synergies with development or livelihoods and social protection programmes among the host population.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The overarching conclusion from this series is that the intended evolution towards self-reliance has not occurred. The international community's response to refugees in protracted crises is failing to deliver. Concerted action is required among all actors to resolve the issues blocking progress, backed by the political and financial will to enable refugees to make productive contributions to the countries where they live, and to support other long-term durable solutions where appropriate.

Recognizing that WFP and UNHCR cannot solve this failure alone, the synthesis makes five strategic recommendations for various parties: WFP and UNHCR should develop a strategy and management mechanisms for the transition to self-reliance, using a more holistic approach and establishing the partnerships necessary to achieve it at the corporate and country levels; the Inter-Agency Standing Committee should forge an action plan to enhance the architecture for accountability in this shared responsibility; United Nations country teams should engage livelihoods actors and build political will for a new approach; and donors should overcome funding barriers.

decision of the WFP Executive Board*

The Board took note of “Synthesis Summary Report of the Joint UNHCR/ WFP Impact Evaluations on the Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations” (WFP/EB.1/2013/6-C) and the management response in WFP/EB.1/2013/6-C/Add.1 and encouraged further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* The Executive Board is the Governing Body of the United Nations World Food Programme.

introduction

Global Policy and Institutional Context

1. The Office of the UNHCR and WFP have been working together in support of refugees since before they signed their first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 1985. In protracted situations, WFP programme guidance calls for a multi-year strategic plan for self-reliance,¹ in line with UNHCR's *Handbook for Self-Reliance*.² This reflects the shift from a policy of care and maintenance of refugees in protracted displacement to one of promoting self-reliance. WFP has piloted and adopted new approaches and tools for food assistance, which go beyond in-kind food distribution and include improved nutrition interventions, innovations in food procurement, the use of cash and vouchers, capacity development, and support for livelihoods and long term solutions. UNHCR has used cash grants in repatriation programmes, but has only recently started to consider using them in refugee camps.
2. A series of four joint, mixed-method impact evaluations was carried out during 2011 and 2012, exploring the contribution of food assistance in WFP-UNHCR operations in protracted refugee situations.³ The evaluations analysed the impact of food assistance on:
 - ➔ Myanmar Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, arriving since the early 1990s;
 - ➔ Refugees from the Central African Republic, arriving in southern Chad since 2002;
 - ➔ Eritrean and Somali refugees in Ethiopia, many living in camps for two decades;
 - ➔ Congolese refugees living in camps in Rwanda since 1994.
3. The overall objective of the evaluation series was to provide evidence and inspiration for future strategies for improving the contribution of food assistance to increased self-reliance, and potentially to durable solutions, for both refugees and host populations in protracted refugee situations.
4. This synthesis of the series draws out lessons that emerged across the four evaluations and provides evidence to inform global and agency-specific choices on policies and strategies concerning appropriate forms and focuses for food assistance in protracted refugee situations. The main intended audiences are policy- and strategy-makers within WFP and UNHCR, governments hosting refugees in protracted situations, donor agencies and other relevant United Nations agencies.

¹ WFP Programme Guidance Manual (PGMWiki) on refugees.

² <http://www.unhcr.org/44bf40cc2.html>

³ The selection criteria were: i) Minimum seven years of operations and still ongoing in 2009; ii) More than 50,000 refugee beneficiaries in 2009 and at least two of the four countries should have an average of more than 100,000 refugee beneficiaries per year from 2003 to 2009; iii) Camp/settlement situation; iv) Sample includes examples of all major modalities used in the last five years to address protracted situations; v) Sample broadly represents overall geographic profile of WFP and UNHCR portfolio; vi) Situation is evaluable, but not recently evaluated; vii) UNHCR and WFP country office and host government are interested in the evaluation being conducted.



Water point in Nayapara UNHCR camp.
© UNHCR / C. Canteli

Theory of Change

5. These impact evaluations tested the validity of an intervention logic⁴ derived from the MOU between UNHCR and WFP and the two agencies' respective policies and programme guidance. This logic posited that the agencies' combined activities and inputs contributed to increased refugee self-reliance over three stages of evolution, starting from the refugees' situation on arrival. Although this logic provided the rationale for evaluating food assistance in the four contexts, it did not have formal status within either agency. All four evaluations tested its assumptions and the extent to which food assistance contributed to outcome levels over time. A diagram of the logic model is provided in the Annex to this report.
6. While all four evaluation reports refer to the intervention logic, it is most thoroughly described and analysed in the Rwanda and Ethiopia evaluations.

⁴ Referred to as the "theory of change" in some evaluation reports.

Methodologies Used

7. All four studies used a similar theory-based mixed-methods approach to assess the extent to which food assistance contributed to expected outcomes and impacts, and to unintended effects, and the changes that would be needed to improve this contribution to the attainment of self-reliance and durable solutions. The methods included desk reviews; interviews with WFP and UNHCR stakeholders; reviews of literature and secondary data; quantitative surveys; transect walks; and qualitative interviews, including with focus groups of beneficiaries and members of local refugee-hosting communities.
8. Given the impossibility of using conventional counterfactuals, other relevant comparisons were selected for each context. In Chad, expectations that encamped refugees would grow their own food had led to a phased reduction to half rations in some camps. While the main focus of the other evaluations was on encamped and officially recognized refugees, the Bangladesh report also analysed some indicators for the large number of people judged by UNHCR to be refugees according to the criteria of the 1951 Refugee Convention, but not acknowledged as such by the Government of Bangladesh and thus officially disqualified from receiving humanitarian assistance.
9. All the evaluations used secondary data to analyse the evolution of nutrition indicators such as global acute malnutrition (GAM), severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and stunting rates, throughout the evaluation period, with the exception of Rwanda, where only data from 2008 were available. Household food security was measured using the standard indicators of food consumption score (FCS), household dietary diversity score (HDDS) and coping strategy index (CSI). Although FCS, HDDS, CSI, and asset scores to measure household levels of wealth were calculated from similar modules of the questionnaires used by evaluators, using standard or similar techniques, they were not always directly comparable.
10. Comparability among the evaluations was further complicated by variations in definitions of concepts, and contextual and other external factors influencing the lives of refugees in protracted situations.
11. In several contexts availability of previously collected data had limitations. The team in Rwanda lacked systematic nutrition data from the camps and surrounding areas. Teams in Bangladesh, Chad and Ethiopia faced poor historical record-keeping and inaccurate camp databases. Enumerators often found that particular households were not where they were supposed to be or were no longer in the camp.
12. Possible biases in quantitative survey data arose from the timing of surveys in Chad and Rwanda, which could have an impact on accessibility, respondent availability, food consumption and dietary diversity, depending on the season and the timing of the last GFD. In some of the places visited many men were away, taking advantage of early rains to work in their fields. In Bangladesh, the sample was redesigned several times because man-headed households were difficult to identify. In Rwanda and some camps in Chad, responses may have been influenced by refugees' resentment at reduced rations, respondent interview fatigue and the host community's expectations of assistance.
13. However, the main guarantor of the validity of the findings is the very broad range of sources and methods used to assemble evidence and its triangulation.

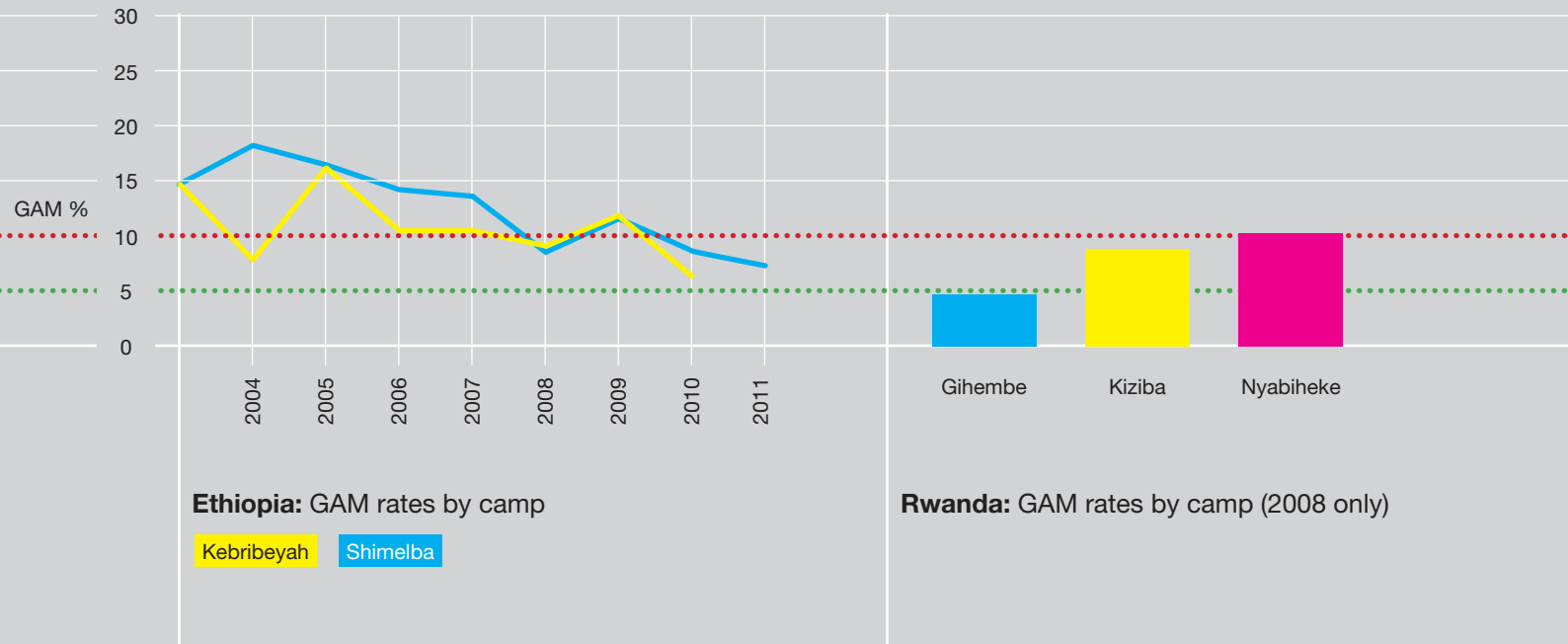
main findings by results area

Food Security

14. Unacceptably high numbers of refugee households were not food-secure, especially in the second half of the period between food distributions. Women were found to be more food-insecure than men, often because they had more dependants. Seasonality, insufficient funding and pipeline breaks were among the main factors affecting the food security of refugees.
15. Specific findings from the different evaluations underlined the limited effects of food assistance on food security in the longer term. In Rwanda and among Tigrayan refugees in Ethiopia, a narrow majority – fewer than 60 percent – attained acceptable FCS. In Ethiopia the remaining refugees had borderline or poor FCS, with only a third of Somali refugees reaching the acceptable level. In Chad, camps receiving full rations presented higher percentages of households with acceptable FCS (81.1 percent) than camps receiving half or no rations (about 40 percent) or than neighbouring villages (62.2 percent).
16. A combination of internal and external factors affected food consumption. In some programmes, lack of funding and/or pipeline breaks resulted in WFP general food rations providing individuals with less than the standard 2,100 kcals per day. In Rwanda, refugees never received the intended complete ration package. In contrast, in Ethiopia the full basket of food commodities was delivered to the camps on schedule in most months from 2008. Rations were delivered on time in Bangladesh, but family sizes did not coincide with ration sizes because beneficiary figures were not updated, so food rations were shared widely and did not meet families' needs. In Chad, rations did not cover needs, particularly for cereals, and reduction to half rations led to deterioration of food security.
17. Although using slightly different definitions of households headed by women, all the evaluations found that these households tended to suffer more from food insecurity. However, in evaluations that included surveys of non-beneficiary households – Bangladesh⁵ and Chad – it was observed that the gap between households headed by women and those headed by men was smaller among beneficiaries. This finding indicates that food assistance had a positive effect on narrowing the gender gap in food insecurity.
18. Refugee women's lives were ruled by the cycle of distributions. They knew the value of each kind of food or non-food item (NFI) received and made crucial decisions in the period of hunger leading to the next GFD. However, except for in Rwanda, women's participation in camp food distribution committees generally remained limited, and in Ethiopia patriarchal norms went unchallenged. Women were generally the managers of household food supplies and bore the burden and risks of indebtedness, even when they themselves did not hold ration cards. In Rwanda, women were given cards but this had the unintended effect of increasing indebtedness.

⁵ Comparisons were made with unregistered refugee women at makeshift sites in Bangladesh.

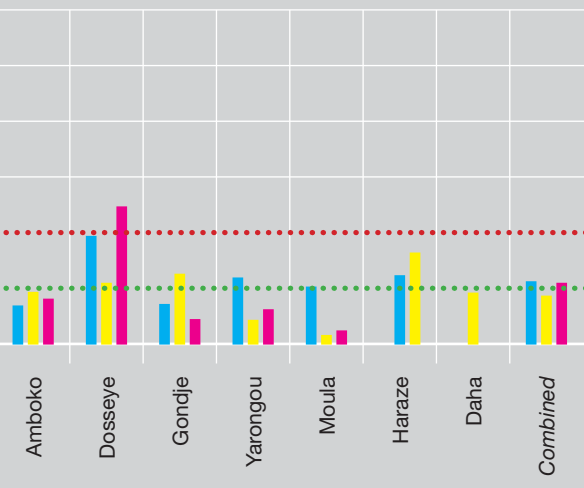
Figure 1: GAM Rates Among Surveyed Population Groups



Nutrition

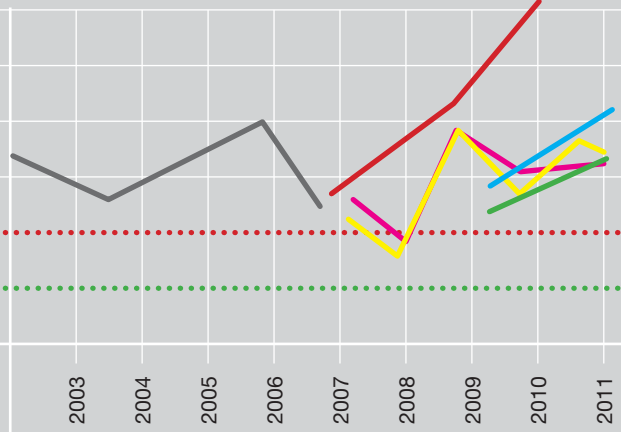
19. **Global acute malnutrition rates:** As Figure 1 shows, GAM rates in the refugee camps in Chad were close to the “internationally acceptable” level of 5 percent and were fairly stable from 2008 to 2011. In Ethiopia, the trend was positive from 2005, except for a spike in 2009, but was still above the “acceptable” level. In Rwanda, in 2008 – the year for which statistically valid data were available – rates were close to “serious”, but there was evidence that the situation had improved since then. In Bangladesh, the data suggested a worsening trend, from “serious” towards “critical”, but rates in the refugee camps were similar to or lower than those in the host population and appeared to be more under control – they were substantially better than those in the makeshift sites for unregistered refugees.
20. Severe acute malnutrition rates in Chad and Ethiopia were brought below the 1 percent threshold (see Figure 2), except for in the Kunama ethnic group among Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. Rates in Ethiopia were similar to or considerably better than those prevailing in the regions where the camps were located. In contrast, in Bangladesh, although they improved, SAM rates in the camps remained above the World Health Organization (WHO) threshold for emergency (2 percent).^v
21. All four evaluations found low dietary diversity among refugees, whose diets were monotonous and generally insufficient. Meat, eggs, fish, fruit, dairy products and green vegetables were not consumed at all or were consumed less than once per week, and anaemia rates remained high.
22. The household dietary diversity score seemed to depend on food distribution, as basket items were sold or exchanged for complementary items, so HDDS reached higher values on the days after a distribution.

⁶ No trend data were available for Rwanda. In 2008, rates were acceptable in one camp, but at emergency levels in the other two.



Chad: GAM rates by camp

2008 2010 2011



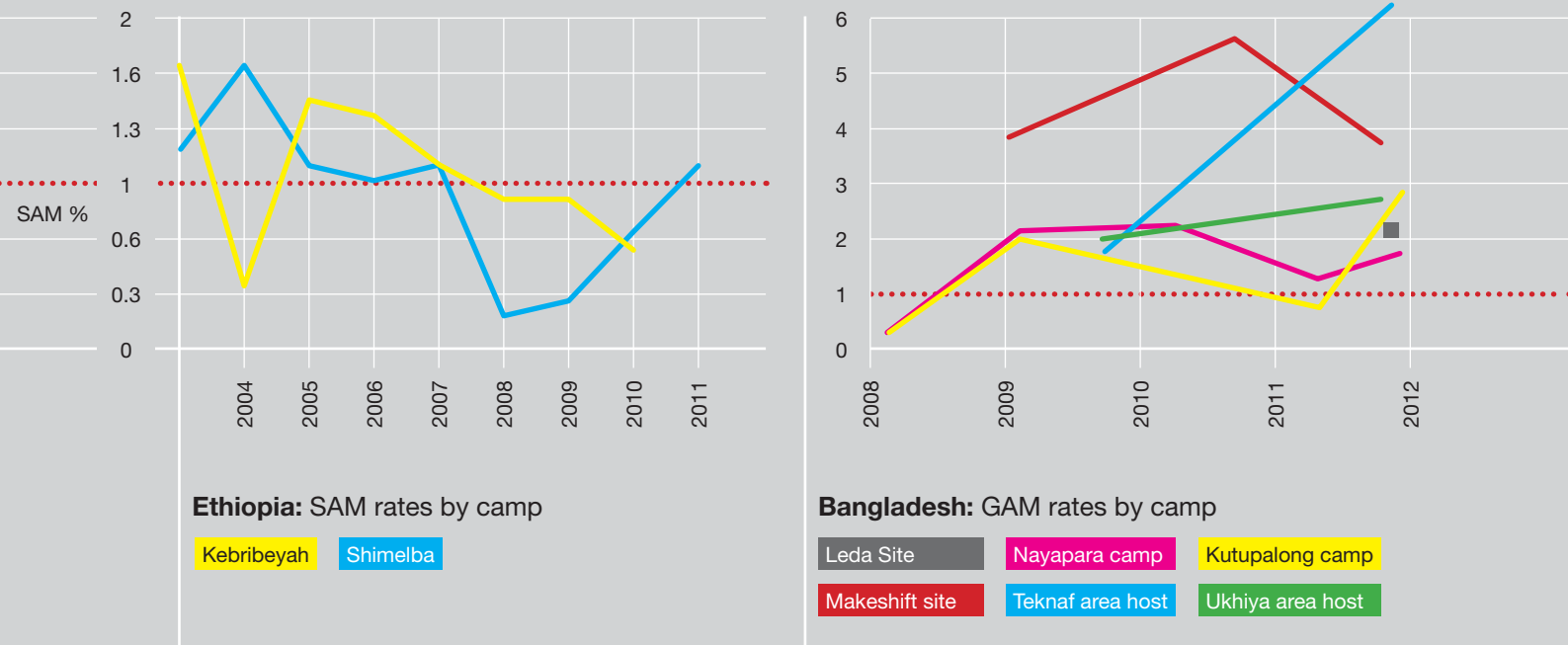
Bangladesh: GAM rates by camp

Both off. camps Nayapara camp Kutupalong camp
 Makeshift site Teknaf area host Ukhiya area host



Enumerator interviewing a refugee man in camp of Amboko (Community center)
 © UNHCR / C. Canteli

Figure 2: SAM Rates Among Surveyed Populations



23. Some evaluations reported dietary deficiencies in the rations themselves, which may reflect a trend across the four contexts, although there were differences in the rations provided. In Chad, rations were often deficient in protein, calcium and vitamins B2 and C. In Bangladesh, they were deficient in protein and micronutrients. In Rwanda, the ration met only 95 percent of energy requirements, was deficient in vitamin A – providing only 54 percent of the requirement – iron (92 percent), calcium (44 percent) and riboflavin (73 percent), and was completely lacking in vitamin C.
24. All four evaluations revealed high stunting rates and anaemia prevalence. In Rwanda, chronic malnutrition rates exceeded the international humanitarian threshold for critical. In Bangladesh and Chad, rates were above the 30 percent high-severity threshold. In Ethiopia, they varied by ethnic group, appearing to be negligible among Somali refugees but unacceptably high among Eritrean Kunama refugees. Cultural attitudes to food, food preparation and child rearing, and variations in how much of the food ration refugees sold and their access to external sources of income could lead to different food-related outcomes among refugees with broadly similar food distribution regimes. In all cases, rates were similar to national rates.

Livelihoods

25. Livelihood options for refugees in all four evaluations were limited; refugees were often cut off from skills development and had very limited or no access to labour markets. Many refugees therefore searched for alternative livelihood opportunities, some of which involved negative coping strategies such as work that exposed them to protection risks and exploitation. Selling food items or NFIs was another common coping mechanism.
26. The only service that most refugees in all four contexts could offer was unskilled day labour. Exceptions were noted in Rwanda and among refugees in Bangladesh. Significantly, the Bangladesh survey indicated that unregistered refugees living in urban areas, who did not benefit from food assistance, assimilated better than registered refugees and were engaged in similar labour activities to equivalent quintiles in the local population. The four evaluations demonstrated that very few refugees owned businesses or engaged in petty trade. Most business activities in and around camps were owned by local residents.

27. Refugees have limited bargaining power. A common aspect of the three Africa evaluations was that local residents frequently appeared to charge refugees above-market prices for milling and electricity or bought their rations at poor terms of trade. In Bangladesh, refugees employed in dangerous tasks such as loading and unloading ships, and deep-sea fishing were paid significantly less than local people, despite labour laws. This fueled tension with locals, who were themselves often food-insecure and resented registered refugees' receipt of rations.
28. Common to all evaluations was the limited focus on livelihoods in assistance provision. This was partly because of short-term funding, as in Ethiopia, or government-imposed limitations, as in Bangladesh. The Rwandan report mentioned that most refugees appeared motivated to improve their livelihoods, but as assistance concentrated on ensuring an acceptable level of food security and health, rather than on protecting or building assets, there was little scope for refugees to plan beyond their current needs.
29. The evaluations found that livelihoods support, when given, was generally weak, although there were considerable differences in levels of such support. The Ethiopian evaluation noted that there were too many small, unconnected and low-intensity activities to make a difference for most refugees. Vocational training and microcredit support were non-existent, sporadic, very low-scale and/or discouraged by host governments. In Rwanda, the evaluation noted that the quality of training and the material support provided for start-up were insufficient to make most beneficiaries competitive enough to earn a livelihood on the open market.
30. Access to adequate farming or grazing land was essential for self-reliance, but spatial limitations on camps – especially those in densely populated areas of densely populated countries such as Rwanda and Bangladesh – and government policies restricted access to land. In Rwanda, refugees were banned from owning livestock. In southern Chad, they were given access to unviably small parcels of land, where they were unable to practise the crop rotation of local farmers and saw soil fertility decline and pest damage increase.
31. Refugees' relations with local communities were another factor that limited their livelihood opportunities, often because of competing access to local resources – such as river fishing, fuelwood or farmland – or labour opportunities, particularly for day labour. There were reports from Chad that local people drove refugees from the land that was allocated to them by the Chadian authorities.
32. The evaluations also indicated that livelihood or income-earning opportunities varied significantly across camps, by sex and by ethnicity within camps. Women heads of household, who generally had high dependency ratios and child-rearing responsibilities, were particularly hampered by lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities and exposed to risks when forced to leave camps to look for income sources. In all four contexts, many households headed by women engaged in precarious short-term activities such as fuelwood collection, and transactional and survival sex.
33. In the general absence of viable livelihood strategies, the evaluations reported that the main sources of refugee income were day labour and the sale of food rations and NFIs. Rations and NFIs were sold and exchanged for a variety of reasons, but primarily for basic needs: to purchase complementary food items, particularly condiments, clothing, soap and fuel, or to pay for access to mills, health services and schools. The Ethiopian report estimated that up to half of all rations were sold. In Rwanda, the food ration constituted the refugees' main source of income and security, even though it was lower in calories, diversity and nutritional quality than in earlier years. In Bangladesh, food ration cards⁷ were deposited with moneylenders who took part of the ration as interest until the money was paid back.

⁷ Called “family books” in Bangladesh.

Protection and Gender

34. The evaluations indicated considerable variation in the provision of protection support. Refugees generally reported feeling safer inside camps, often noting improvements in in camp security since their arrival. However, in all evaluations, protection issues were reported inside the camps. Women, especially widows and women heads of household, were more vulnerable in all cases, because of both their search for livelihood opportunities and domestic violence.
35. The Bangladesh evaluation explored the relation between food assistance and protection through comparisons with refugees who did not receive food assistance. The evaluation identified informal protection mechanisms operating throughout the region, which were linked to patronage systems and protection from community groups and imams and were often used in emergency situations such as hospitalization. However, this type of protection was more common among the unregistered refugees living in makeshift sites close to official camps than among those receiving food assistance.
36. Refugees reported vulnerability to violence and intimidation by camp authorities and non-elected, designated refugee leaders. Local patrons, the business community and local authorities were also linked to cases of abuse and violence against refugees. Refugees did not use complaint mechanisms because they feared retaliation. However, in Bangladesh, abuse, sex work and exploitation were even more common among unregistered refugee women living in makeshift sites than among registered refugee women inside the camps.



37. In all four countries, women and adolescent girls were exposed to SGBV in their search for income. In Bangladesh, Chad and Ethiopia there were reports that girls in vulnerable food-insecure refugee households had been forced into early marriages, often as co-wives of prosperous locals. If divorced, women had been left with dependent children who may not have had rights to rations because of patrilineal determination of citizenship and refugee status. In Ethiopia, there were reports of increased levels of polygamy as a coping strategy.
38. There was also evidence that domestic violence may have increased as a result of protracted displacement. Women could be at risk from men who felt emasculated by camp life and the inability to provide for their families. In Bangladesh, frustrations and lack of space provoked high levels of tension within refugee households. In Chad, domestic violence increased after distributions because men, who may have recently returned from the Central African Republic, sought to control the use of food rations.
39. In contrast, in Rwanda, UNHCR provided strong protection services via non governmental organization (NGO) partners. These services included protection from SGBV, HIV prevention and support to people living with HIV. Although HIV remained stigmatized, prevention services slowly reduced this stigma and increased voluntary testing. Refugees acknowledged that SGBV would have been much worse without the commitment of UNHCR and partners to protecting women and children. In Bangladesh, there were few legal measures available to refugees – registered or unofficial – in cases of SGBV. In Chad, the focus was usually on reconciliation, rather than on assisting women to register complaints. In Ethiopia, refugee women and girls suggested that the root causes of protection issues were not addressed and so these issues continued. In Ethiopia, protection services were rated as more effective in camps for Somalis than in those for Eritreans.



Rohingya children in Nayapara UNHCR camp.
© UNHCR / C. Canteli

Effects of Food Assistance on Relations between Refugees and Host Populations

40. The evaluations presented a mixed picture, but relationships were never either purely antagonistic or purely harmonious. The presence of refugees – receiving food and NFIs and drawing in additional infrastructure and basic services – was usually welcomed. Exceptions typically occurred when food assistance ignored the needs of local poor people or when refugees and local populations competed for scarce local resources.
41. Host and refugee communities in Rwanda shared a language and culture, and had cordial relations, including mutual visits, friendships and intermarriage. The refugee presence also had a positive impact on local markets and labour availability, and host communities realized ancillary benefits from the services provided to refugees. Similar relations were reported in the other two African evaluations. Ethiopian host communities around Tigrayan camps appreciated the food they could acquire from refugee rations. They also sold goods and services to refugees, boosting local market activity. In the early years of the Chad programme, locals benefited from programmes distributing seeds and tools. Refugees lent their health cards to local people, giving them access to camp-based health services without charge.
42. In contrast, in Bangladesh, despite a high degree of cultural affinity, strong resentment against refugees led to many incidents of violence between the two communities near the official camps. An interesting finding was that relations between Bangladeshis and unregistered refugees were more favourable than those between locals and encamped refugees. Tensions arose from the most vulnerable locals' envy regarding the distribution of food to refugees but not to needy local poor people, who were sometimes in equally vulnerable situations.
43. Over time, and given that all refugees in protracted displacement searched for fuelwood and/or made charcoal for their own consumption or sale, the evaluation reports all showed that some kind of conflict was highly likely, even in amicable contexts such as in Rwanda. Erosion and deforestation around refugee camps were an issue in Bangladesh, but were most severe in Ethiopia, where the evaluation reported a total depletion of environmental resources.

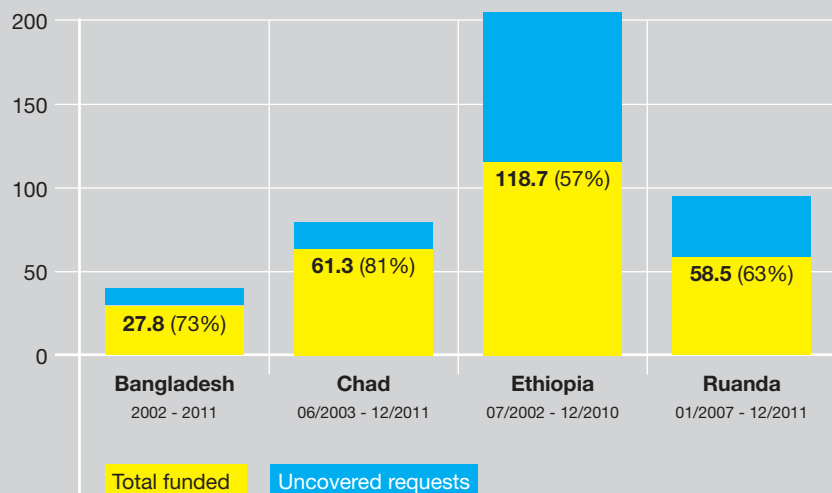
factors that explain and influenced the results

External Factors⁸

44. Although diverse factors specific to individual contexts influenced the lives of refugees in protracted situations, two factors dominated all four contexts evaluated and are echoed in literature on other contexts: donor funding and host government policies.
45. Figure 3 illustrates how WFP received less than the expected levels of donor support. When funding was short, priority was given to maintaining basic food support, rather than to planned or ongoing activities for developing greater self-reliance in the longer term.
46. Long-term support for protracted refugees fits uneasily into conventional donors' humanitarian and development assistance modalities, which created a challenge for WFP and UNHCR in ensuring funding for protracted situations. For example, the United States Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration was the largest donor for the four programmes, but is primarily an emergency humanitarian agency and is not mandated to engage in development activities in refugee camps. Other donors were similarly constrained.
47. Evaluations noted that WFP and UNHCR country offices, on their part, had not developed joint funding proposals to attract donors whose modalities could bridge the emergency–development transition. In Ethiopia, NGO implementing partners had to seek their own funding to implement important recommendations made in joint assessment mission (JAM) reports.
48. While funding shortfalls were a factor behind the non-achievement of self-reliance objectives, they were by no means the sole explanation. Host governments allow refugees to enter and remain on their territory, and their policies shape refugees' pathways to self-reliance. Mobility, access to job markets and access to land are fundamental. In Rwanda, government policy gave refugees freedom of movement and access to local schools and some forms of employment. Strict regulations restricted movements of Somali refugees in Ethiopia and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, particularly the registered minority. In Chad, many refugees left camps to travel to the Central African Republic or elsewhere in Chad. In all four contexts, host governments did not permit the formal integration of refugees and sufficient land was not made available (see paragraphs 25 to 33). UNHCR and WFP did not seem to have consistently advocated for refugees' economic rights, while national refugee authorities working with WFP and UNHCR may have had an interest in preserving the care and maintenance model as it entails the inflow of humanitarian assistance on which these institutions depend for supporting their staff and infrastructure.

⁸ These are the contextual factors that are outside the control of WFP and UNHCR.

Figure 3: WFP Funding Figures in Selected Protracted Situations



Source: WFP/UNHCR Joint Impact Evaluation Series.

Funding to Rwanda and the last protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) in Chad include assistance to host populations. PRROs in Ethiopia include Sudanese refugees, who were not considered in the evaluation. Costs per beneficiary were computed based on the latest PRRO operation document available at the WFP online operations database www.wfp.org/operations/list

49. The Office of the UNHCR formally recognizes the importance of education for self-reliance. The policies of host States strongly influence access and there were significant differences in the quality and duration of provision across programmes. Two-thirds of all official refugee household heads had never received education of any kind.
50. Access to health services also varied because of funding levels and national policies. The Rwanda evaluation stated that “health services are effective and health supplies above standard in the three camps”. In Ethiopia, “low mortality rates for adults and children in the refugee camps reflect household access to adequate health services”. In Chad, where government cost-recovery policies were applied to refugees, there were concerns about the lack of a strategy for addressing anaemia and the worsening provisions for adults and adolescents with malaria.
51. The refugees’ own aspirations were another important factor. In the Shimelba camp in Ethiopia, Eritrean refugees – especially young men and boys – were not actively engaged in local income-generating activities because their main objective was resettlement in a third country. In Chad, many refugees primarily sought the durable solution of repatriation. In Bangladesh, the experience of unregistered Rohingya refugees showed that *de facto* local integration, albeit illegal, was a pathway towards self-reliance.

Internal Factors

52. Accurate food targeting and ration card use relies on accurate household profiles, but these were often unavailable. Revalidation is expensive and was not undertaken regularly. In Chad, UNHCR could not determine who was actually present in camps. The evaluation team heard confirmation of the phenomenon – mentioned in a JAM – of Chadian citizens acquiring refugee status and ration entitlements. Camp databases in Ethiopia were also judged to be inaccurate.
53. The Ethiopian evaluation found that the food monitoring carried out by WFP or UNHCR was insufficiently intensive. In Ethiopia and Rwanda, where WFP did not manage warehousing in

⁹ These are the implementation factors that are within the control of WFP and UNHCR.

the camps, WFP lacked the formal authority to respond quickly to distribution or warehousing improprieties. Refugees in many contexts alleged that there were cases of under-scooping and criticized UNHCR and WFP for not spending enough time in camps. In Bangladesh, refugees asserted that on the rare occasions that WFP staff were present at distributions, the quality of rice and pulses improved. They believed that the United Nations could do more to combat corruption and administrative abuses by camp officials.

54. Milling costs everywhere were borne by refugees, often obliging them to hand over a portion of the grain they received to mill operators. In Rwanda, evaluators estimated that milling costs incurred the loss of 20–30 percent of the rations received. This burden on refugees and incentive to sell rations continued despite a JAM recommendation to assist refugees in developing cooperatively run mills. In Ethiopia, WFP attempted to compensate refugees by providing more grain, but the additional grain's value proved to be less than the costs of milling.
55. WFP may have missed opportunities to establish links and synergies with its other programmes. In Ethiopia, there were no links to WFP programmes serving local communities close to the camps. In Chad, WFP refugee programme staff seemed to lack information on a programme on the other side of the border with the Central African Republic, providing food to internally displaced persons (IDPs).
56. The Rwanda report noted that UNHCR acknowledged its mandated responsibility to provide NFIs such as soap, clothing, sanitary pads, sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets, kitchen utensils, cooking stoves, housing materials and jerry cans. Substantial NFIs, such as shelter materials or mosquito nets, were generally supplied to refugees on arrival, but other distributions of non-perishable items either did not occur or occurred infrequently and were sometimes inappropriately timed, encouraging refugees to sell the items.
57. For example, in Rwanda, most households were found to lack blankets, sleeping mats, adequate clothing and jerry cans. In Chad, where malaria rates among children under 5 have risen in recent years, the evaluation team found evidence that challenged UNHCR's statistic of 80 percent of children sleeping under mosquito nets, suggesting that many refugees had sold the nets they received. In Ethiopia, refugees received mosquito nets in the second half of the malaria season, and plastic sheets outside the rainy season. There was no monitoring to determine whether or not refugees still had them. Refugee households sometimes replenished their NFI supplies by selling some of their rations, which increased their food insecurity.
58. The Rwanda evaluation drew attention to the difficulty of disentangling the effects of inadequate quantities of NFIs from those of inadequate food assistance. The two were linked in a vicious circle, which was also apparent in the other three contexts. The evaluation report explained: "Refugees are compelled to convert an already reduced food basket to cash to cover basic needs. This produces a cycle of debt that reduces the impact of food assistance on food security and undermines any potential livelihood gains... [the] majority of [the] most vulnerable households lack access to other livelihood options and sources of income beyond selling their food rations. [...] The inability of UNHCR to provide adequate NFIs and the absence of viable livelihood activities means in practice that WFP's barely adequate food basket is subsidizing basic non-food requirements. This situation forces refugees to employ negative coping strategies."
59. The Ethiopian evaluation noted an apparent failure to meet obligations contained in the revised 2002 MOU between UNHCR and WFP, which stated that joint plans of action based on JAM recommendations would be developed, setting out mutually agreed goals, objectives, responsibilities, indicators and implementation arrangements. However, follow up on JAMs was poor. Except for in Bangladesh, the two agencies did not attempt to make joint appeals to donors to plug identified gaps. JAMs often focused on minor issues, rather than major shifts in programme strategy.
60. The PRRO duration of two to two and a half years, with programme activities planned for three to six months, has not been conducive to facilitating durable solutions. Durable solutions would require a longer-term plan, formulated in a participatory way with refugees.

Rwanda / Congolese refugees / Kiziba camp.
© UNHCR / F. Noy



conclusions

61. Although the detailed findings of the four evaluations were very context-specific, the synthesis identified the following common conclusions and lessons.
62. **Food assistance has had positive effects on the expected short-term outcomes of hunger mitigation immediately after refugee arrival and has contributed to the achievement of immediate food security when full rations were distributed.** Some positive effects on coping strategies were found. GAM and SAM rates have improved in most but not all cases.
63. **As situations become protracted, unacceptably high numbers of refugee households – and disproportionately more households headed by women – have not been food-secure, particularly during the periods between food distributions.** Levels of chronic malnutrition remain unacceptable and critically far from international standards. Households have accumulated few assets, have had very limited livelihood opportunities and have frequently resorted to negative coping strategies. In the absence of livelihood opportunities, food rations and NFIs have been widely treated as income and sold to meet other needs as part of coping strategies.
64. **The desired evolution towards greater self-reliance for refugees through improved access to livelihood opportunities, while maintaining or increasing food security, has not occurred.** Food assistance has not been used to open pathways to self-reliance and durable solutions. Testing of the intervention logic/theory of change makes it clear that major assumptions concerning refugees' use of food assistance have not held, even sufficiently to achieve intermediate outcomes.
65. **Protection, particularly against SGBV, has remained inadequately addressed in all four contexts.** Despite considerable progress in some camps, SGBV remains underreported, many perpetrators enjoy impunity, and there are gaps in judicial advocacy and in counselling for SGBV survivors. This is not a new finding. The protection risks facing refugee women have been known for a long time in many displacement contexts, including the four evaluated. Where relations between refugees and local populations are tense, protection issues have also been reported by refugees moving outside the camps. Relevant observations and recommendations from JAMs have not been followed up.
66. **A combination of contextual factors and factors within the control of WFP and UNHCR lie behind this sobering picture.** In all four situations, the external environment has not been conducive to improving self-reliance or finding durable solutions, with host government policies and chronic funding shortfalls for protracted refugee situations limiting the apparent options. In addition, UNHCR and WFP have not used or created opportunities. Lesson learning has been complicated by the failure to keep records of early site planning or programming interventions in response to the needs of refugee caseloads. The contextual and internal factors have interacted to create a vicious circle.
67. Both agencies have made long-standing formal corporate commitments to facilitating the transition to self-reliance and durable solutions, but **the assistance provided by WFP and UNHCR has remained dominated by a care and maintenance approach in camps, using GFD as basic support – appropriate for short-term situations, but not for those that are protracted or likely to become so.**

68. The ambitious new corporate objectives regarding self-reliance and durable solutions agreed between WFP and UNHCR have not been translated into formal strategies and practices for food assistance. Especially at the corporate level, there has been little contextualized review of the intervention logic of food assistance, to consider how food assistance could be used to make a meaningful contribution to self-reliance, taking account of the new tools available. Responsibility for taking the initiative seems to have been left with country offices.
69. To a greater or lesser extent, ***the refugees in these protracted situations are economic and social actors in host communities***. Host populations face many nutrition and livelihoods constraints, but there has been little recognition of these constraints and little integration of interventions for refugees and their hosts, based on a contextualized analysis of the scope for alternative food assistance modalities that such integration would give. There have been insufficient efforts to collaborate with host governments and to bring in other actors with humanitarian and/or development mandates.
70. Long-term GFD, combined with the limited educational and economic opportunities in and around camps, has created a sense of disempowerment among refugees. It was significant that in Bangladesh, unregistered refugees living in host communities but lacking legal status appeared to have better food security and a greater range of coping strategies and to be closer to self-reliance than refugees in the camps.
71. Overall, in conclusion, ***the international community's response to the plight of refugees in protracted crises is failing to deliver on agreed intentions***. No single government – whether host country, country of origin or donor – or humanitarian or development agency can alone resolve the issues behind this failure: new strategies and partnerships are required.
72. ***Concerted action is required among all essential actors to create a collaborative strategy, backed by political and financial will, to enable refugees to make active and productive contributions to the countries where they are living while they are refugees*** and to support their repatriation where it is a viable long-term durable solution.

Ethiopia/ Somali refugees / Hilaweyn camp.
© UNHCR / J. Ose



recommendations

73. As the four evaluations included in this synthesis will be used at the country level, each evaluation made a number of recommendations specific to the country concerned. These include operational recommendations related to improving monitoring, such as of nutrition and child-feeding practices and SGBV; revalidating camp populations; increasing women's involvement in camp committees; scaling up livelihood interventions, such as vocational training, microcredit and income-generation projects; and combating environmental degradation.

74. In addition, strategic recommendations were made in response to common patterns. These recommendations have been developed into a set of final recommendations for the series of impact evaluations:

75. Recommendation 1:

Under the auspices of the WFP/UNHCR High-Level Meeting, a working group from both agencies should develop a joint corporate strategy and operational framework for refugees in protracted displacement and for the role that food assistance can play. The strategy should:

- a) recognize that encampment brings risks to the prospects for self-reliance and that the current approach to food assistance is insufficient;
- b) outline plausible pathways to self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees in protracted displacement, and the role that food assistance – including complements to GFD such as cash, vouchers or food for work – can play;
- c) develop a more holistic approach and the partnerships necessary to achieve it;
- d) establish management mechanisms for implementing the strategy, incorporating more systematic use of JAMs, both in specific countries and in synthesis for corporate learning.

76. For WFP, the approach should reflect and be embedded in the new Strategic Plan (2014–2017).

77. This process might start with the WFP/UNHCR High-Level Meeting organizing a reflection to deepen analysis of why the two agencies find it so difficult to address the challenges and implement an approach for building self-reliance and of what each agency may need to change to develop the necessary partnerships.

78. Recommendation 2:

All actors should recognize that improving the lives of refugees in protracted displacement is not the business of WFP and UNHCR alone but must involve coordinated change in the approaches currently followed by United Nations country teams, particularly development-oriented agencies, host States, donors and implementing partners, as well as UNHCR and WFP. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations should be encouraged to take a lead role in building this recognition and the resulting actions, notably by strengthening the architecture for accountability to help bring forgotten crises to an end and to focus the international community's attention on its responsibilities under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol.



Gihembe Refugee Camp, Congolese Refugees.
© UNHCR / M. Read

79. **Recommendation 3:**

United Nations country teams should:

- a) engage and advocate with host governments for refugees' rights to mobility, to practise livelihoods, to protection and to some form of acknowledged integration when repatriation remains elusive;
- b) engage with host governments to improve the selection of camp sites for those in or likely to be in prolonged displacement, with the goal of enabling refugees to make a meaningful contribution to national and local economic development while minimizing conflict over natural resources and the accompanying negative implications for the environment, economy and protection;
- c) monitor the prospects for repatriation and seek to increase spontaneous returns;
- d) encourage donors to be more flexible (see recommendation 4);
- e) insist on greater involvement of United Nations agencies specialized in protection, development and gender issues;
- f) engage with refugees' host and original States to advance political solutions to protracted displacement.

80. **Recommendation 4:**

Donors should overcome or remove barriers to conventional funding restrictions based on dichotomies between emergency and development situations.

81. **Recommendation 5:**

WFP and UNHCR country teams should systematically develop consensual programme strategies for the transition to self-reliance, based on contextualized knowledge of refugees' specific needs and prospects for long-term durable solutions – repatriation, local integration or resettlement. These strategies should transform the existing planning architecture based on joint plans of action to provide a strategic management tool for the country level, which:

- a) draws in new partnerships and funding; and
- b) provides a reference point for operation design and approval.

82. Annual progress reports should be made to the United Nations country team and to the UNHCR-WFP High-Level Meeting.

83. The strategies should be based on analysis of inter-community social and economic relations between refugees and host communities and among groups of refugees within camps, and on market analysis of the potential for complementing GFD with alternative modalities. Selection of the food assistance modalities should be based on analysis and the desired objectives, rather than the other way around. This is a precondition for aligning programming with contextual realities and for improved understanding of the sale of food assistance and NFIs and the recourse to negative coping strategies. Strategy development should involve new partnerships with relief and development actors active in the area, the host government and refugees themselves.

annex: logic model – the impact of food aid assistance on protracted refugee populations

Result Chain	How?			Whom?		
	Inputs/ Resources	Assumptions	Outputs/ Activities	Participants/ Stakeholders ¹	Assumptions	
Needs & Results logic over time	T₀ (before)					
	T₁ (early)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFD (full ration) • Stoves/pots/utensils • Fuel • Soap, water • Complementary foods • Supplementary foods • Therapeutic foods • Latrines 	<p>Livelihoods are lost (refugees have no money), fully dependent on external assistance, registration systems functioning, distribution systems functioning, delivery systems functioning, local partners have sufficient capacity, 2100kcal/day/person is sufficient, food basket is sufficient, internal targeting is too difficult</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2100 kcal/day (general) • NFIs • Food basket for households • Water supply • Therapeutic feeding centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New arrival camp and non-camp populations • New arrival PoC (separated children, victims of violence, special needs, etc.) • Camp leaders/ food distribution staff • Host communities 	<p>Food is taken home, grains can be milled, complement of interventions provided (therapeutic feeding, NFIs, WASH, etc.), predictable food and NFI delivery schedules, local institutions exist (for service delivery, trading, etc.), host communities are receptive, services provided to PoC (OVC tracing, family reintegration, etc.), continued security and protection within camp and non-camp settings, natural environment is suitable, intra-household distribution is equitable, targeting is effective, non-food assistance inputs are provided (schools, teachers, training, transportation, communication, etc.)</p>
	T₂ (yrs 2-3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFD (partial ration) • Stove/pots/utensils • Fuel • Soap • Water • Complementary foods • Supplementary foods • Cash/vouchers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial rations (general) (targeted) • Complementary foods • School feeding • Cash/voucher schemes • NFIs • Water supply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing camp and non-camp populations • PoC • Local organizations and volunteers providing delivery support • Host communities 	
	T₃ (protracted)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GFD (partial ration) • Fuel • Soap • Water • Complementary foods • Supplementary foods • IGA supplementary training/supplies • Cash/vouchers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial rations (general) (targeted) • Complementary foods • School feeding • Cash/voucher schemes • Water supply • IGA activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing camp and non-camp populations • PoC • Local markets & market actors • Local support institutions • Host communities 	

¹ These participants/stakeholders are not mutually exclusive.

² Repatriation, resettlement and local integration are the three UNHCR 'durable solutions'.

³ Protection, community development, and self-reliance are the phases toward local integration.

⁴ Self-reliance is the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity. Self-reliance, as a programme approach, refers to developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern, and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian/external assistance.

		What (short and intermediate outcomes)			Why? (impact)
Reactions	Short-term	Assumptions	Intermediate	Long-term	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population movement from conflict, drought, insecurity Ethnic divisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selling of assets Loss of assets Damage to agricultural crops Hunger 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Movement across borders Formal encampment Informal resettlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displaced population Livelihoods broken Food insecurity Insecurity/conflict Separated families 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumption of food equitably within household Use of NFIs by targeted households Acute and chronic malnourished accept and receive care Host communities cooperate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lives saved through hunger mediation Security and protection provided 	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Food is sold and consumed (mix), access to land (legal or illegal), legal status allows for employment, local institutions provide beneficial services (dispute resolution, family integration, communication, transportation, etc.), cultural/linguistic barriers can be addressed, assets are not liabilities, remittances can flow, educational opportunities are appropriate (language, culture, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in mortality (crude mortality) Reduction in GAM Reduced vulnerability Reduction in reliance on external assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repatriation² Resettlement Local integration (camp) (out-of-camp) Protection³ 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial rations supplement purchased food Cash/vouchers utilized to improve food security Use of WASH and other complementary interventions Local organizations provide institutional support for integration and livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved knowledge/ access to water and sanitation Improved access to food basket Supplementary livelihood activities (cash income, agriculture, etc.) Security and protection provided 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved nutrition (acute malnutrition) (chronic malnutrition) Improved food basket (diet diversity score) (food consumption score) Improved neonatal and <5 outcomes (<5 anthropometric indicators) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repatriation Resettlement Local integration (camp) (out-of-camp) Community development 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial rations supplement purchased food Inputs used to supplement/complement livelihood strategies Local institutions (service delivery and markets) support refugee livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved food security Improved access to livelihood opportunities Coping strategies are positive Asset building Improved schooling 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved nutrition Improved food basket Improved <5 outcomes HH with successful IGAs (cash income) HH with successful agricultural activities Family re-integration Improved education outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repatriation Resettlement Local integration (camp) (out-of-camp) Self-reliance⁴ 	

* All acronyms in this Annex can be found in the List of Acronyms (next page).

acronyms

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

CSI	coping strategy index
FCS	food consumption score
GAM	global acute malnutrition
GFD	general food distribution
HDSD	household dietary diversity score
HH	households
HLM	high-level meeting
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IGA	income generation activity
JAM	joint assessment mission
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NFI	non-food item
NGO	non-governmental organization
OVC	orphans and other vulnerable children
PoC	point of contact
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SAM	severe acute malnutrition
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

management response

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SYNTHESIS SUMMARY REPORT OF THE JOINT UNHCR/WFP IMPACT EVALUATIONS OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS

Background

1. This document constitutes a joint management response to the recommendations made in a synthesis of four impact evaluations on food assistance for refugees in protracted situations, commissioned by WFP's Office of Evaluation and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Policy Development and Evaluation Service.
2. The evaluations were undertaken to provide an evidence base for future organizational strategies regarding how food assistance can contribute to refugee livelihoods and self-reliance, thereby supporting the wider search for solutions to protracted refugee situations.
3. The following definitions are used in this document:
 - a) A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets – including social and physical assets – activities and opportunities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets.
 - b) Self-reliance is the ability of people, households or communities to meet their basic needs, including food and nutrition, and enjoy social and economic rights in a sustainable and dignified manner. Self-reliance is a positive livelihoods outcome.
 - c) A durable solution for refugees is attained when refugees are able to avail themselves of the protection of a state by means of voluntary repatriation to their country of origin, local integration in their country of asylum, or resettlement in a third country that has agreed to admit them on a permanent basis.
4. A core aspect of the joint work of WFP and UNHCR is ensuring that durable solutions are complemented by support that facilitates self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.
5. At a high-level meeting (HLM) between UNHCR and WFP held on 9 January 2013, management welcomed the evaluation and agreed that it provided compelling evidence of the need for all parties to renew their commitment to supporting the attainment of durable solutions for refugees in protracted situations. The HLM also reiterated the importance of placing the recommendations and related responses into historical context, recognizing that many of the issues raised by the synthesis evaluation have been on the international community's agenda for many years.
6. The joint responses to the recommendations are presented in the attached matrix.

Recommendation 1:

Under the auspices of the WFP/UNHCR High-Level Meeting, a working group from both agencies should develop a joint corporate strategy and operational framework for refugees in protracted displacement and for the role that food assistance can play. The strategy should:

- a) recognize that encampment brings risks to the prospects for self-reliance and that the current approach to food assistance is insufficient;
- b) outline plausible pathways to self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees in protracted displacement, and the role that food assistance – including complements to GFD such as cash, vouchers or food for work – can play;
- c) develop a more holistic approach and the partnerships necessary to achieve it;
- d) establish management mechanisms for implementing the strategy, incorporating more systematic use of joint assessment missions (JAMs), both in specific countries and in synthesis for corporate learning.

For WFP, the approach should reflect and be embedded in the new Strategic Plan (2014–2017).

This process might start with the WFP/UNHCR High-Level Meeting organizing a reflection to deepen analysis of why the two agencies find it so difficult to address the challenges and implement an approach for building self-reliance and of what each agency may need to change to develop the necessary partnerships.

Action by: WFP and UNHCR Headquarters

Management response and action taken/to be taken

Agreed.

In formulating a joint corporate strategy, WFP and UNHCR will take full account of the international community's limited success after striving for many years to promote refugee livelihoods and self-reliance and establish more effective linkages between humanitarian aid and longer-term development processes in protracted refugee situations.

Both organizations recognize that the promotion of self-reliance and durable solutions in protracted refugee situations is often constrained by host government policies – regarding freedom of movement, access to land, the right to work, etc. – and the availability of predictable and multi-year funding, which enables a transition from food aid and other forms of relief assistance. WFP and UNHCR will continue to advocate on these issues with host and donor states.

WFP and UNHCR will use the formulation of a joint corporate strategy and operational framework as an opportunity to re-examine the internal constraints identified in the synthesis report and to determine how to address them. Entry points for further joint engagement include UNHCR's ongoing preparation of a revised policy position regarding the out-of-camp settlement of refugees – as refugees who are subjected to encampment and associated restrictions on their economic activities are often unable to establish sustainable livelihoods and attain self-reliance – and its efforts to develop a livelihood strategy and to pilot new approaches for plausible pathways to self-reliance for populations of concern in both rural and urban settings. These efforts are being undertaken in consultation with the World Bank and non-traditional partners such as the private sector, and seek to build practical experience and a list of good partners.

WFP and UNHCR will review protracted refugee situations and identify those with good potential for promoting livelihoods and self-reliance. Strategic plans based on these findings will involve other members of United Nations country teams (UNCTs), engage with both host and donor states, and emphasize the role that food assistance can play in the shift from care and maintenance approaches.

To learn lessons from past experience, UNHCR will identify situations in which refugees have successfully moved from food aid towards self-reliance, and will identify the key variables that facilitate such transitions. WFP will be kept informed of this exercise and will be invited to contribute ideas and information.

WFP and UNHCR will ensure that their governing bodies are fully informed of action taken. Management will disseminate the findings of the synthesis report internally and externally. WFP and UNHCR will prepare a joint report on initial progress in implementing this recommendation for submission during 2014. (Precise dates to be discussed with respective governing bodies.)

Implementation deadline: June 2014

Recommendation 2:

All actors should recognize that improving the lives of refugees in protracted displacement is not the business of WFP and UNHCR alone but must involve coordinated change in the approaches currently followed by United Nations country teams, particularly development-oriented agencies, host States, donors and implementing partners, as well as UNHCR and WFP. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations should be encouraged to take a lead role in building this recognition and the resulting actions, notably by strengthening the architecture for accountability to help bring forgotten crises to an end and to focus the international community's attention on its responsibilities under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol.

Action by: WFP and UNHCR at the Headquarters and country levels

Management response and action taken/to be taken

Partially agreed.

WFP and UNHCR agree that the promotion of livelihoods and self-reliance and the search for durable solutions in protracted refugee situations require full engagement with UNCTs, development actors and host and donor states. Both organizations agree about the need for more systematic exploration of the roles that the private sector and civil society might play, and will take steps to ensure such engagement at the global, regional and country levels.

However, the HLM recognized and reaffirmed UNHCR's mandated role in leading and coordinating international action for refugee protection and solutions and agreed that the IASC Task Force on Accountability to Affected Populations was not an appropriate entity to lead the promotion of livelihoods and self-reliance in protracted refugee situations. WFP and UNHCR agreed that a more effective approach might be to ensure that the issue of food assistance, livelihoods and self-reliance in protracted refugee situations is included in the international development agenda.

Implementation deadline: Ongoing

Recommendation 3:

United Nations country teams should:

- a) engage and advocate with host governments for refugees' rights to mobility, to practise livelihoods, to protection and to some form of acknowledged integration when repatriation remains elusive;
- b) engage with host governments to improve the selection of camp sites for those in or likely to be in prolonged displacement, with the goal of enabling refugees to make a meaningful contribution to national and local economic development while minimizing conflict over natural resources and the accompanying negative implications for the environment, economy and protection;
- c) monitor the prospects for repatriation and seek to increase spontaneous returns;
- d) encourage donors to be more flexible (see recommendation 4);
- e) insist on greater involvement of United Nations agencies specialized in protection, development and gender issues;
- f) engage with refugees' host and original States to advance political solutions to protracted displacement.

Action by: WFP and UNHCR at the Headquarters and country levels

Management response and action taken/to be taken

Partially agreed.

WFP and UNHCR recognize the need for UNCTs to support efforts to provide refugees with protection, solutions, livelihoods and self-reliance opportunities in situations of protracted displacement. Both organizations also acknowledge that efforts to identify sites for refugee camps and settlements and to mitigate the impact of refugee influxes on the environment – and hence on relations between refugees and host communities – must involve the authorities at both the central and local levels. Every effort will be made to engage the UNCT and the host governments, not only in protracted refugee situations but also in more recent refugee emergencies, so that livelihoods and self-reliance can be promoted from the outset of a refugee situation.

However, in line with the response to recommendation 2, WFP acknowledges UNHCR's specific mandate in relation to refugee protection and solutions. Both organizations maintain that any efforts by a UNCT to monitor prospects for repatriation and to enhance spontaneous return should be led by UNHCR; organized return may be a preferable approach in some refugee situations and for certain groups of refugees.

WFP and UNHCR agree that the United Nations system needs to engage with refugees' host states and countries of origin to advance political solutions to protracted displacement. Such efforts must be fully consistent with international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement, which prevents refugees from being returned to a country where their lives or liberty would be at risk.

Implementation deadline: Ongoing

Recommendation 4:

Donors should overcome or remove barriers to conventional funding restrictions based on dichotomies between emergency and development situations.

Action by: Donors

Management response and action taken/to be taken

Noted.

WFP and UNHCR will continue to advocate for transitional funding from donor states; the limited scale and late availability of such funding has consistently impeded efforts to link short-term refugee relief with longer-term development processes.

Both organizations note that this issue has been on the international community's agenda for almost 30 years; the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA 2) Conference of 1984, jointly sponsored by UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme, noted that such assistance should be "development-oriented from the outset". WFP and UNHCR will continue to work with donor states and development actors to ascertain how barriers related to conventional funding restrictions might be overcome or removed. An initial discussion of this issue with donor states is scheduled for March 2013 in the context of UNHCR's Transitional Solutions Initiative.

Implementation deadline: Ongoing

Recommendation 5:

WFP and UNHCR country teams should systematically develop consensual programme strategies for the transition to self-reliance, based on contextualized knowledge of refugees' specific needs and prospects for long-term durable solutions – repatriation, local integration or resettlement. These strategies should transform the existing planning architecture based on joint plans of action to provide a strategic management tool for the country level, which:

- a) draws in new partnerships and funding; and
- b) provides a reference point for operation design and approval.

Annual progress reports should be made to the United Nations country team and to the UNHCR-WFP High-Level Meeting.

The strategies should be based on analysis of inter-community social and economic relations between refugees and host communities and among groups of refugees within camps, and on market analysis of the potential for complementing GFD with alternative modalities. Selection of the food assistance modalities should be based on analysis and the desired objectives, rather than the other way around. This is a precondition for aligning programming with contextual realities and for improved understanding of the sale of food assistance and non-food items (NFIs) and the recourse to negative coping strategies. Strategy development should involve new partnerships with relief and development actors active in the area, the host government and refugees themselves.

Action by: WFP and UNHCR country offices

Management response and action taken/to be taken

Partially agreed.

WFP and UNHCR are in broad agreement with this recommendation, while underlining that a transition to self-reliance is not always feasible in protracted refugee situations that are strongly affected by the external constraints identified in the synthesis report.

WFP and UNHCR fully agree on the need for continuous assessment of the prospects for durable solutions, and will make the maximum use of any opportunities that arise. However, the three durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement are usually contingent on political developments, which humanitarian and development actors can influence but not control or direct.

WFP and UNHCR will strive to improve understanding of local and regional markets; remittance receipts; interactions among groups of refugees within camps and among encamped refugees, out-of-camp refugees and local hosts; and the role that local and cross-border mobility plays in refugees' efforts to establish livelihoods and become self-reliant.

Such analyses will go beyond the relatively narrow focus of the current joint assessment missions, to provide a basis for the formulation of livelihood and self-reliance strategies that enable a phased reduction of direct food assistance, according to mutually agreed benchmarks that protect the nutrition status of all refugees, especially those with specific needs, such as older people, people with disabilities and households headed by women.

Implementation deadline: Ongoing

Note on the Side Event to the 56th Meeting of the Standing Committee

Joint UNHCR-WFP evaluation of the contribution of food assistance to durable solutions in protracted refugee situations: Presentation of synthesis report and management response

Tuesday 5 March 2013, 13:00-15:00hrs, Palais des Nations

In 2011 and 2012, WFP and UNHCR jointly undertook a series of evaluations of the contribution of food assistance to durable solutions in protracted refugee situations. Evaluation missions took place in four countries: Bangladesh, Chad, Ethiopia and Rwanda. Following completion of the individual evaluations, a synthesis report was produced, which articulated five overarching recommendations. A management response to the synthesis report was formulated at a High Level Meeting between the two agencies in Geneva on 9 January 2013. The *Synthesis of Mixed Method Impact Evaluations of the Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations and the Management Response to the Synthesis Summary Report of the Series of Impact Evaluations of Food Assistance for Refugees in Protracted Situations* were presented at a side event to the 56th Meeting of the Standing Committee of UNHCR on 5 March 2013, in order to stimulate discussion on the joint evaluation series.

The side event was chaired by Mr. Steven Corliss, Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management, UNHCR. The panel members were Ms. Helen Wedgwood, Director of the Office of Evaluation, WFP, Mr. Chris Kaye, Director of the Performance Management and Monitoring Division, WFP, and Mr. Jeff Crisp, Head of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR.

The Director of the Office of Evaluation, WFP, provided an overview of the synthesis report of the joint evaluation series. She explained that these were theory-based mixed method impact evaluations, designed to test whether food assistance together with UNHCR inputs had achieved the intended outcome of self-reliance and durable solutions for refugees. The overall results, described as “sobering”, indicate that the intended progression towards refugee self-reliance has not been achieved. This can be attributed to both internal institutional factors and to external factors, notably funding shortfalls and host country policies. She noted that while the findings of the joint evaluation reflect poorly on the whole international humanitarian community, the price for these shortcomings is paid by the most powerless.

The Director of the Performance Management and Monitoring Division, WFP, noted that the reports from the joint evaluation series had been formally adopted by the WFP Executive Board. He then provided an overview of the management response to the joint evaluation, noting that WFP and UNHCR stand together in recognizing the need for a paradigm shift in the provision of food assistance. WFP and UNHCR would develop a joint strategy and operational framework with a view to addressing internal constraints identified by the evaluations. Whilst affirming the continued lead role of UNHCR in accordance with its mandate, both agencies recognized that promoting self-reliance requires the engagement of a range of actors, including UN Country Teams and host governments. The agencies affirmed the need for more reliable and sustained transitional funding, and committed to develop strategies for self-reliance informed by specific contextual analysis, to the extent possible within the external constraints identified by the evaluations.

The Head of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR, provided a historical perspective on the issue of food assistance to refugees in protracted refugee situations. Previous efforts to promote refugee self-reliance have achieved limited success and encountered a number of common constraints, including restricted access to land, labour markets and mobility, insufficient funding, and the late engagement of development actors. The question is how relevant actors can



learn from the past, as well as the findings of the joint WFP-UNHCR evaluation, so as to ensure that refugees facing protracted displacement enjoy food security, livelihoods opportunities, self-reliance and the potential to find lasting solutions.



The Director of the Division of Programme Support and Management, UNHCR, concluded that while the findings of the evaluation series are sobering, they present an opportunity to re-energize efforts to advance refugee self-reliance in the context of protracted refugee situations. He highlighted a number of initiatives that would be taken by UNHCR in this regard, such as the Transitional Solutions Initiative, a focus on cash-based interventions, and pilot projects in two to three countries with enabling environments to promote livelihoods. Ensuring that food assistance leads to self-reliance is a challenge that UNHCR and WFP are committed to addressing, but it will require a sustained commitment from a broad range of actors.

Delegates expressed their appreciation for the evaluation series and welcomed the collaboration between UNHCR and WFP.

Delegates agreed that mutual benefits could be achieved through strengthening cooperation between development and humanitarian actors. The Director of the Performance Management and Monitoring Division, WFP, acknowledged the value of engaging with other actors, particularly in grappling with the concept of resilience.

The relationship between self-reliance and durable solutions was discussed, particularly whether self-reliance can be considered a solution in itself. The Head of Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR, noted that a distinction can be made between self-reliance and durable solutions, with the former occurring in countries of asylum and preparing refugees to take advantage of durable solutions, which are not geographically confined. Delegates also noted that durable solutions were not a strong focus of the evaluation series. The Director of the Office of Evaluation, WFP, explained very few durable solutions were identified in the four case studies and that for this reason they were not strongly reflected in the reports.

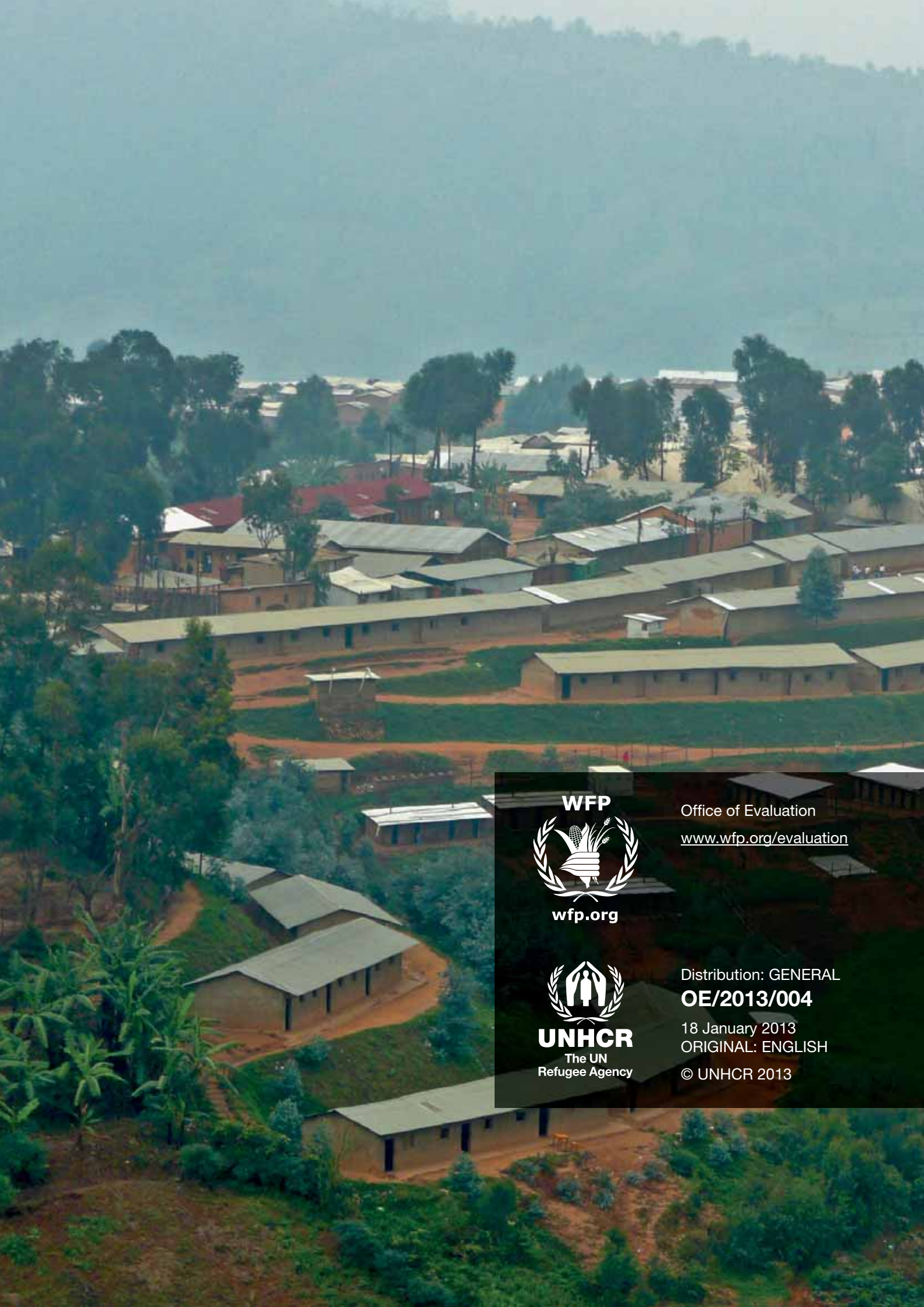
A delegate emphasized the need for a gender sensitive approach to food assistance in the context of involuntary displacement. The Director of the Performance Management and Monitoring Division, WFP, recognized the importance of cooperating with other actors to address the issue of gender-based violence.

One delegate highlighted that a clear accountability framework was required for follow up action on the recommendations of the evaluations. The delegate noted that WFP would integrate the recommendations into its strategic planning framework and asked how the recommendations would be implemented by UNHCR. The Head of Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR, stated that the agency has committed to producing a management response to every evaluation and has established an Internal Compliance and Accountability Committee to monitor the implementation of critical recommendations.

One delegate questioned whether self-reliance is achievable in cases of mass influx. The Director of the Office of Evaluation, WFP, noted that while situations of mass influx pose important challenges, the focus of this particular evaluation series was on protracted refugee situations.

Delegates requested clarification on the role of host governments in the evaluation process. The Director of the Office of Evaluation, WFP, stated that the terms of reference of each evaluation were shared with host governments for comments, and that findings and recommendations were communicated through follow up workshops.

With specific reference to the evaluation on Bangladesh, one delegate noted that the report focused on assessing the achievements of food assistance to date, and requested more detailed recommendations for alternatives. Delegates also stated that attempts to promote refugee livelihoods should be consistent with host government policies and should not shift the burden of refugee assistance onto host countries. Panel members underscored that transitional strategies should be developed together with host governments and agreed that promoting self-reliance and durable solutions are a shared responsibility for the international community.



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