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ANNEX A

DISCUSSION PAPER ON

A STRATEGY FOR FOOD AID IN LESOTHO:

Food assistance to Lesotho has been generous. WFP's assistance to Lesotho has been one of the highest per capita in the world. In addition to WFP, CRS has a complementary programme of food aid of about half WFP's size. Yet Lesotho is asking for more. The following notes help to put Food Aid in Lesotho in perspective with the aim of determining whether traditional projects should or should not continue and whether new projects should be explored.

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

a. Factors pointing to a need for Food Aid in Lesotho

1. Lesotho has sufficient resources, in local food and in cash for commercial imports, to theoretically feed all of its population but uneven distribution of income prohibits as much as 30% of the population from receiving the minimum daily requirement of calories and protein. 1/

2. The full use of available land under present technology and controlled production could not supply the nations calorie needs. 1/

3. Lesotho presently grows only 45% of its overall food requirements. Of the staple crops Lesotho produces roughly 49,000 tons of maize per year and 44,000 tons of wheat. Lesotho imports commercially (not counting Food Aid) roughly 47,000 tons of maize and 40,000 tons of wheat. 2/

4. Lesotho has potential problems which will further aggravate its food situation, the principal of which are the possibility of a large scale return of miners from South Africa, land erosion and population growth.

5. 20% of Lesotho's children suffer from nutritional deficiencies. In the mountain areas 33% of the children between one and five suffer from PCM.

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1. NUL/CU Food System Study, 1976
2. GOL Bureau of Statistics.

6. The majority of families receiving food aid are already the poorest in Lesotho. Their economic hardship is relieved by food aid, raising the level of nutrition and relieving their poverty.

7. The Government has been encouraged by the UN, at what it sees as the highest level (the Farah mission and its successors) to request more food aid both to continue the traditional programmes and in the setting up of reserves. (Reserves were considered a priority by the Farah mission in the context of independence from South Africa).

b. Factors assist the development of food aid programmes in Lesotho.

1. As an LDC Lesotho qualifies for internal transport subsides.

2. Internal transport routes although difficult are not long. Internal transport distances are minimised by WFP's delivery arrangements which allow, as the country is land-locked, delivery to all major entry points around the country's perimeter.

3. As a result of 1 and 2 food aid is relatively chean to Lesotho.

4. WFP is able to offer as its major commodity the normal staple of maize, which although yellow is acceptable.

5. Lesotho's agricultural cycle leaves many people, mainly women, with little to do through much of the year.

6. Lesotho has built up over the years a strong food aid infrastructure of management staff, warehouse staff and warehouses.

7. Food aid is appreciated. There is a depth of sympathetic knowledge about food aid both within the food aid administration and in government and institutional circles.

8. Food aid works. The social and infrastructure benefits are obvious.

9. Food aid has a practical impact on poverty, something that other aid programmes cannot immediately achieve.

10. The country could not otherwise afford to implement the projects supported by food aid.

11. Food aid tracks opened up the mountain areas, some two thirds of Lesotho, before other donor interest in proper roads. Any traveller in the mountains can confirm that aid tracks, however basic, are maintained and remain passable.

c. Food Aid in relation to national statistics

1. WFP and CRS employ daily over 10,000 workers on food for work projects. This compares with a total wage employment in the whole country of roughly 33,500. (4,000 manufacturing, 500 mining, 2,000 construction and public utilities, 1,500 tourism, 11,000 Government services, 14,000 other services).[1]

2. Food aid imports represent about 10% of food resources (WFP around 10,000 tons per year and CRS 5,000 tons per year).

3. Most of the children in primary and secondary schools and patients in hospitals receive food rations as do most of the mothers and children attending health clinics.

4. The Mountain Food Reserve provides basic food security for virtually the complete mountain region.

5. The National Reserve of Wheat would provide valuable political, physiological and practical support to one of the country's most prestigious projects.

1. World Bank Report 1975. Table 6.5

6. WFP's input, in food replacement costs, to the Second Development Plan, compared with other donors, is the fifth largest; taken together with CRS, ie. the total food aid input, is the largest inputs[2]

d. Criticisms of Food Aid.

Although there are many the most serious criticsm is that food aid acts as a disincentive to domestic production of food.

- Food aid does not have any effect on food prices, the usual disincentive to production, as food prices are entirely governed by those in the Republic.

- Any disincentive is in the availability of food discouraging farming by small farmers. Compared with the other major agricultural disincentives of risk, land shortage, erosion, migration, land tenure, ineffecient organisation, high cost of inputs and low investment the availability of food aid becomes an insignificant disincentive.

- Any disincentive has to be measured against the effect of food aid on under-nourishment on the one hand the fact that the very development activities that WFP promotes through food for work (soil and water conservation and access track maintenance) are themselves aimed at increasing domestic production on a scale that the Government could not otherwise afford to undertake.

- A recent survey of food for work labour indicates that those who do work for food do so only when they are not required to work on the land and they themselves feel that the could not increase production if they devoted more time to the land.

2. Donor Conference Papers 1977. OS-17 TABLE V. Estimated Donor Inputs.

(Other criticims include the arguments that food aid:

takes marginal farmers away from their land: postpones government action: diverts skills; encourages parents to shift the responsibility of feeding their children on to the schools: breaks down community spirit : disrupts trade: increases dependence on outside help: runs inefficient food for work projects: by making food available encourages people to keep animals thus aggravating erosion).

B. CONCLUSIONS

1. Although food aid in Lesotho has considerable impact both socially and economically the country still has serious poverty and nutrition problems.

2. Lesotho has political, social and economic problems it cannot escape and which require long term international efforts to alleviate.

3. Food aid directly relieves poverty and demostrably works, it is an obvious vehicle for combatting the problems in the previous two paragraphs.

4. Lesotho could provide, by world standards, an ideal pilot project' location.

C. POSSIBLE STRATEGY

e. Food Aid in Lesotho

Food Aid in Lesotho must:

1. Focus more clearly on the relief of poverty and malnutrition. Assurance of current impact must be made through survey techniques.

2. Encourage economic development through more effective utilisation of food particularly through reasonable productivity levels in FFW programmes.

3. Not draw labour away from agricultural production.

4. Explore new avenue to encourage agricultural production through FFW.

5. Attempt to measure the impact of food programmes, particularly in schools, through survey techniques.

6. Not allow FFW to replace self help at village level on tasks easily identifiable by local communities as being to their immediate advantage.

7. Explore other means of utilizing food aid for development in Lesotho.

f. WFP Rome

WFP Rome are requested:

1. To indicate a planned level of annual food commitments to Lesotho (recognising the effective long term commitment WFP must have to LDC's).

2. Within this overall level, which may allow expansion of activities, to assure Lesotho of continuing support (given sufficient WFP resources) for the traditional programmes for much longer than the current Plan Ops periods which are unrealistically short. Very little will change in Lesotho in the next 3 years. This assurance will strengthen the projects considerably and attract both government and outside investment in them.

3. To make an allocation per project per Plan Ops period of non-food items contributions for warehousing, tools and equipment and transport (WFP's internal transport subsidy significantly relieves problems of transport and finance although it does not overcome the problem of lack of availability of vehicles in the remoter areas).

4. To support in-country semi-technical training for supervisers of WFP activity, possibly with key personnel salary support.

5. Together with WFP Lesotho explore new avenues of assistance, specifically to support the present explorations into National Reserves and to consider a formula for the automatic expansion of food for work activities to take in any viable project within newly established limits (para . f.1.).