

Food assistance for people affected by high food prices



CONTEXT

According to a June 2008 UN Inter-Agency Assessment, food security in Pakistan has significantly worsened as a result of the recent food price hikes. Poor households across the country particularly in the south-western provinces sharing a border with Afghanistan are the most affected. In NWFP province, for example, the severely food insecure population in rural areas (people who consume less than 1,700 kcal per day) has increased by 56 percent. The total number of households in Pakistan falling into this category was estimated to be around seven million.

To cope with this situation, most of the households have reduced their non-food expenditures. However, the poorest households now need to spend over 70% of their income on food and their ability to meet most essential expenditures for health and education has been severely compromised. Without an urgent intervention, Pakistan faces a high risk of missing on the MDG targets and, more immediately, a deterioration in child malnutrition (pre-crisis 38 percent of children under five years were malnourished) and increased child mortality (about 50 percent of child mortality in Pakistan is food related) and rapid increase in drop-out rates in schools.



There is little prospect that the food prices situation in Pakistan will improve in the next 12 months. Consequently, an increasing share of wheat will need to be imported at higher international prices and the fuel price-induced increase in the cost of production will exert strong upward pressure on domestic wheat prices. Additionally, the south-western provinces will continue to be exposed to demand from the neighbouring countries with a significantly higher price level.

The Government has responded to the food crisis by setting up a National Task Force that reports to the Prime Minister. The Task Force accepted the findings of the UN Assessment and used it for planning national safety net interventions. Budgets were allocated for cash transfer programmes that will target 5.2 million food insecure households. However, capacities and resources are uneven. While Punjab province has plans to assist 3.5 million households, other provinces will face a resource gap and around 1.8 million households are likely to remain without assistance unless more resources become available. WFP's assistance is aimed at reducing this gap by reaching about half a million households through schools and food-for-work activities in 20 most food insecure districts in NWFP, Balochistan and in some Arid Zones of the Sindh province.

OBJECTIVES OF WFP ASSISTANCE

The objective of WFP's assistance is threefold: (a) Provide inflation-proof relief assistance to households in areas most affected by the food price shock; (b) Ensure retention of primary school students at a time of high risk of drop-out; (c) Provide employment opportunities and asset creation through Food for Work; and (d) improve nutritional status of malnourished children under 24 months and pregnant and lactating women by providing them fortified blended food.

TARGETING, BENEFICIARIES AND MODE OF INTERVENTIONS

Based on the food insecurity ranking of geographic areas by the Inter Agency Assessment Mission, WFP's intervention is designed to focus on districts with cereal self-sufficiency levels of less than 30 percent and poverty levels (<1,700 kcal/person/day) above 55%. To ensure immediate response, the assistance strategy builds on established delivery systems.

The districts identified for WFP's assistance are: Battagram, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Mansehra, Swat, Lower and Upper Dir in NWFP; Bolan, Chaghai, Noshki, Kalat, Killa Abdullah, Kharan, Pishin and Zhob in Balochistan; and arid zones of Tharparkar, Umerkot, Sanghar and Khairpur in Sindh. (Map on the back page).

The direct recipients of WFP's assistance will be 450,000 girls and boys enrolled in 5,400 primary schools. This represents an extension of WFP's ongoing programme in the most crisis affected districts. The family of each student will be receiving a four-litre tin of edible oil if they enrol a new student or ensure that the students attend classes regularly and don't drop out. In addition, each household will receive 150 kg of wheat to mitigate the price shock in these most food insecure districts. The distribution will take place during three "school days" where parents will be given educational messages (school hygiene, school enrolment and retention, effective use of food rations) and at the end of the day pick up a 50 kg bag of wheat.

UNESCO will provide technical assistance and will train teachers to organize



these events. Around 405,000 households will receive the wheat package factoring in that 10 % households are estimated to have more than one child in primary school. The schoolteachers will also receive vegetable oil and wheat ration as incentive to implement this programme.

Assistance by the WFP through schools will reach the families of between 40 and 70 percent of primary school students in the targeted districts. Beneficiary lists will be made public so that any overlap with the Government relief assistance is prevented. The monthly income transfer value of wheat and oil ration will be almost equivalent to the Benazir Card initiative of PKR 1,000 per month.

In selected districts, Food for Work (FFW) activities will also be undertaken. Marginalized poor farmers/communities will be encouraged to create and rehabilitate assets to improve their livelihoods. Work activities will include: Improvement of irrigation channels, field terraces, walking tracks, establishment of nurseries and planting of orchards and fuel and fodder trees. Women will be encouraged to receive training and raise homestead kitchen gardens and other practical skills.



Approximately 40,000 food insecure households will receive a food basket of 100 kg wheat and eight litres of oil as a compensation for their participation in the FFW activities. Most of the participants are expected to participate for 75 days per year and will receive food at a value of approx. Rs. 9,000 equivalent to Rs. 1,000 per month during the lean season of nine-months. WFP will also arrange seeds for kitchen gardening.

Provision of 3,915 mt of fortified blended food for some 87,000 beneficiaries is made to support UNICEF/WHO health and nutrition interventions in response to the food crisis. Children between 6 to 24 months and malnourished pregnant and lactating mothers will receive a monthly pack of 7.5 kg of Fortified Blended Food (FBF).

The planned distribution of 86,295 mt of food will comprise 70,750 mt of wheat, 11,630 mt of edible oil and 3,915 mt of blended food. Of this, 57% will be distributed in NWFP, 28% in Sindh and 15% in Balochistan.

MONITORING AND COORDINATION

Based on a request from the Government of Pakistan, WFP will present the proposal through its Headquarters for donor funding. Funding for the first round of food distributions has been earmarked by a major donor and WFP. Loans of wheat and any cost-sharing by the Government would further enhance the full delivery of the relief intervention. A Letter of Understanding with the Government of Pakistan through MINFAL will stipulate roles and responsibilities of the Partners.

Within the context of the "One UN" initiative, WFP will closely coordinate with UNESCO, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF and WHO to enhance the quality and impact of assistance provided and link up with any additional interventions, particularly in the fields of seed and fertilizer assistance to small farmers and nutrition/health interventions for vulnerable mothers and children. UNESCO to provide support in arranging trainings at provincial and district level to sensitize and train the staff of Education Department on the operational modalities of the implementation. UNESCO will also develop message modules on food for education, health/hygiene, nutrition for the parents. Both WFP and UNESCO will work together to ensure the content of this material is gender sensitive and is in line with the local culture and traditions of the area.

A rapid launch of the planned National School-feeding Programme designed to reach out to 50 districts would be a valuable complement to the WFP-assisted interventions.

WFP will work closely with the Education and Forest Departments to plan, implement, monitor and report on the progress. Additional staff will be recruited by the WFP to be posted in its provincial offices who would monitor the food distributions and ensure that targeted beneficiaries are reached. Monthly data will be compiled on food movement and distribution and the number of beneficiaries receiving assistance.

WFP will seek the assistance of Provincial Food Departments to provide storage facilities at the district level from where the food will be transported directly to schools. Where such arrangements cannot be made, temporary storage facilities will be arranged.

At each Provincial Education Department, a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) exists to implement WFP's current oil distribution programme. The capacities of these units will be further enhanced to make them capable to implement this programme through Executive District Officers (EDOs) who will be tasked to; i) identify schools; ii) prepare list of households of enrolled students for food entitlement; iii) arrange for listing of food from district warehouses to the school; and iv) keep track of distribution and reporting. WFP will transfer funds to the designated official of PIUs for disbursement of funds to EDOs to meet transportation and other expenses as mutually agreed.

The District Coordination Offices will provide support in the implementation of this programme by facilitating storage facilities, security and will be provided with the list of households receiving assistance under this programme to avoid duplication with other social protection schemes such as the Benazir Card.

At the federal level, WFP will coordinate with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MINFAL), Planning Commission, Economic Affairs Division and Office of Adviser to Prime Minister on Policy and Coordination related matters. Periodic meetings will be held both at the Federal as well as at Provincial level to review the progress of implementation of the programme.

The evolving food security situation and thus the impact of the food crisis response will be monitored through a system of market price monitoring and surveillance of sentinel sites in all provinces (locations for monitoring would be same or similar to the survey sites used during the rapid assessment conducted by the UN Inter-Agency Mission in June 2008).

Quarterly reports will provide information on:

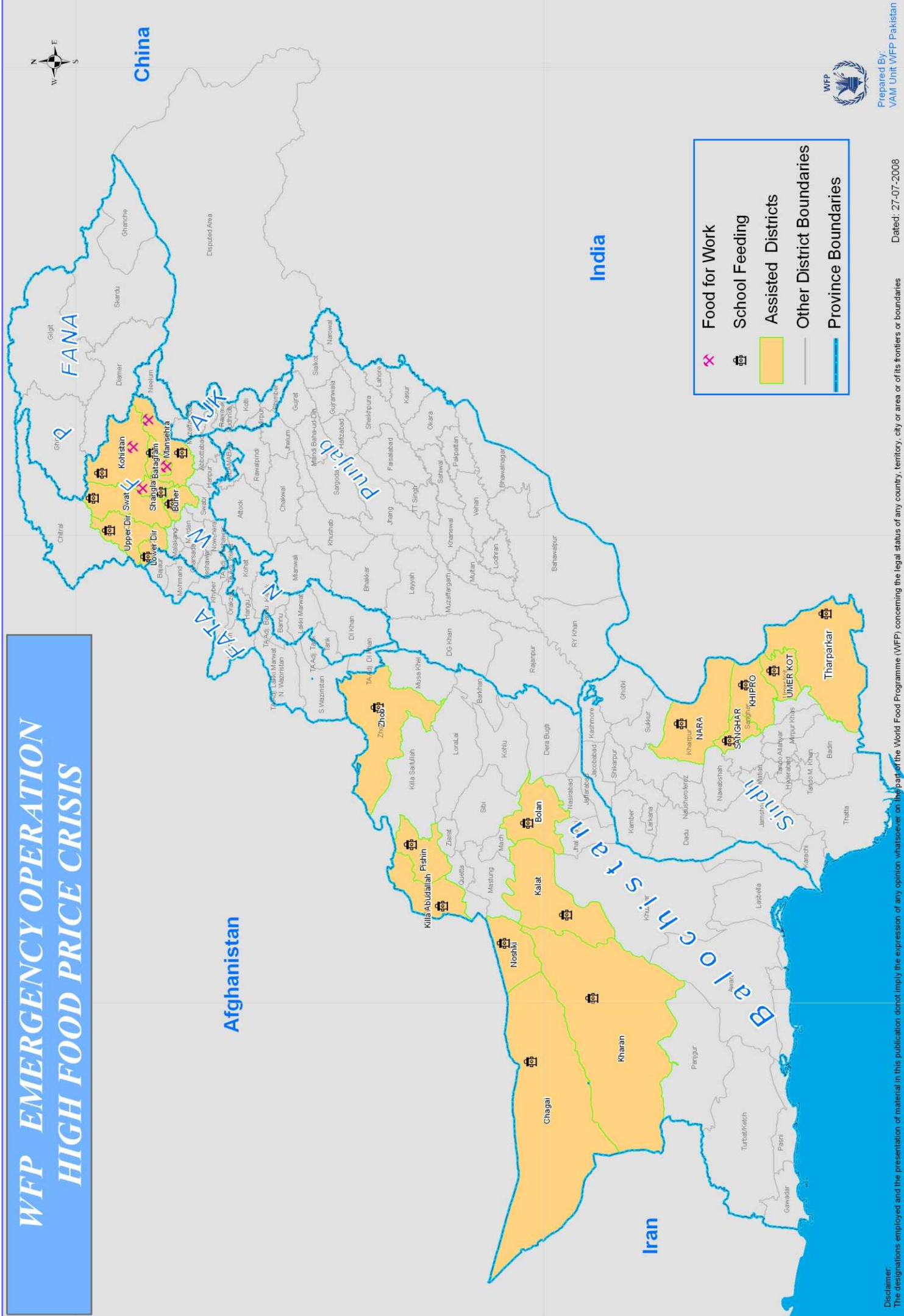
- Local market food prices and wage labour rates
- Household food security, in particular diet diversity and food frequency
- Change in infant feeding practices and disease prevalence
- School drop out rates

A recently started action research project to assess food prices and cross-border flows will assist in monitoring changes in cereal availability.

PROJECT INFORMATION	
Food tonnage	86,295 MT
People to be assisted	3.1 million
Total Cost	USD 71 million
Duration	Sept '08 - Sept '09



WFP EMERGENCY OPERATION HIGH FOOD PRICE CRISIS



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