



Review of WFP Food Assistance Programming Practices in Southern Sudan

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Review of WFP Programs in Southern Sudan

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Acronyms

ANA	Annual Needs Assessment
CFSAM FAO/WFP	Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
EC	European Commission
ECW	Enhanced Commitment to Women
EMOP	Emergency Operations
FAF	Food Aid Forum
FEA	Food Economy Analysis
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FIC	Feinstein International Center
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GNU	Government of National Unity
GoS	Government of Sudan
GoSS	Government of Southern Sudan
HEA	Household Economy Analysis
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
JIU	Joint Integrated Units
LAF	Livelihood Analysis Forum
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NCP	National Congress Party
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PRRO	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SIFSIA	Sudan Integrated Food Security Information for Action
SPLM/A	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army
SPR	Standardized Project Report
SRRA	Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association
SSCSE	Southern Sudan Center for Statistics and Evaluation
TSU	Technical Support Unit
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIS	United Nations Mission in Sudan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

The World Food Programme has been providing humanitarian food assistance to vulnerable communities and groups in Southern Sudan for over twenty years, but circumstances have changed following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005. The Feinstein International Center undertook this review of programs in Southern Sudan to help WFP Sudan make the needed changes to adapt to these new circumstances. The objective of this study is to improve programming in the 2007 EMOP and the subsequent PRRO. The Feinstein International Center views this as one step to building a long-term partnership with WFP Sudan.

The report reviews changes in the operating environment in Sudan generally and Southern Sudan specifically following the end of the long-running war between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Government of Sudan. While the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is beset with numerous challenges, it offers Sudan the framework to move from a situation of protracted internal conflict to a more peaceable coexistence. In the short term, however, this may cause humanitarian conditions to deteriorate as hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced people move back to their places of origin, where there is little in the way of infrastructure or livelihood possibilities in the immediate term. Timely assistance will be necessary in order to enable communities to absorb large numbers of returnees without falling victim to further food insecurity and vulnerability. In the longer term, the stage must be set for livelihood recovery. In these circumstances WFP has a unique opportunity to decide on its core function and role.

The contents of this report are confined to a review of documents availed by WFP Sudan, and published papers, reports, and documentation found in the "gray" literature. No first-hand observation or direct interviewing was possible, given the short period of time available for the review. Hence the recommendations here may be suggestive rather than comprehensive. Major issues arising include: the information systems and analytical capacity on which program decision-making rests; monitoring, understanding, and addressing the continued high prevalence of acute malnutrition in Southern Sudan; the targeting, timing and delivery of food aid in Southern Sudan; and questions related to organizational learning in a protracted acute emergency situation. Other issues that emerged, but for which there was less evidence in existing documentation include: the impact—positive and negative—of food aid transactions on local markets and communities; the impact of food aid on gender and intra-household relations; and the impact of food aid on conflict, displacement and protection.

In the absence of direct observation or interviewing, the Tufts team undertook to note where the internal and external documentation appears to converge around problems and solutions, and where they diverge. In both cases, the team made a judgment about the strength of the evidence on which they were based. Where there is broad agreement and the evidence base is convincing, recommendations for program and practice are fairly straightforward. Where views are varied or divergent, the team did its best to judge the evidence and recommend accordingly, but tentatively, pending confirmation through field work and stakeholder consultation. Where the evidence base is weak or contradictory, further research is needed to determine programmatic directions. The recommendations are in the final section of the report, but are summarized in Table 1. The final section also includes recommendations for transitional programming.

Table 1. Analytical Matrix – Review of WFP Program in Southern Sudan

Issue/Question	Views of WFP and External Observers	Evidence for WFP Conclusions	Evidence for External Conclusions	Main Implications for WFP (More detailed recommendations in Section V)
Evidence of change in food security trends post-CPA	Converge	Limited	Limited	Continued emergency response in some areas; Transition to longer-term support for livelihood recovery in others
Information systems and reliability of assessment/ monitoring information	Diverge	Limited	Limited	Improve information system and analytical capacity Greater collaboration among information systems Emphasize iterative monitoring over annual assessments
Understanding the causes of malnutrition and adjusting WFP program accordingly	Diverge	Weak	Limited	Urgent need for nutritional surveillance and improved analytical capacity Undertake urgent research to understand key constraints to improved nutrition
Timing of food aid arrivals in Southern Sudan	Converge	Good	Good	Improve timing and pre-positioning of food for EMOP
Targeting and distribution of food aid in Southern Sudan	Variable	Weak	Variable	Action research to understand the dynamic interaction of targeting and distribution with local traditions, trying and documenting different methods
Impact of food aid on gender relations and intra-household dynamics	Variable	Limited	Weak	Move beyond counting participation to understand the way in which the war and the relief effort have changed gender relations, and the implications for programming
Impact of food aid on migration, displacement and protection/safety	Variable	Limited	Limited	Research and incorporate lessons learned about civilian protection in delivery of food aid in Southern Sudan Monitor to prevent the manipulation of food aid
Impact of food aid on trade and commodity markets	Not clear	Weak	Not discussed very much	Important area for further research and monitoring
Role of food aid, and WFP generally, in transitional programming	Variable	Not discussed very much	Limited	Investigate potential for cash/voucher programming Emphasize organizational learning Monitor investments in vulnerability reduction Research and understand dynamics of post conflict livelihood recovery

Introduction and Background

The World Food Programme has been providing humanitarian food assistance to vulnerable communities and groups in Southern Sudan for over twenty years. The war-time conditions in which most of this program took place changed following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005. WFP Sudan is adapting to this new situation in Southern Sudan and aims to develop a new strategy for 2007-2011 that is aligned with national priorities as articulated in the CPA and other relevant national policies, taking into account the evolving realities on the ground. While the Emergency Operation (EMOP) will continue through 2007, beginning in 2008 WFP's program in Southern Sudan is expected to transition to a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO).

The Feinstein International Center (FIC) convened the Food Aid Forum on behalf of WFP Sudan in June 2006 in Khartoum. Expert opinions and views were presented from a variety of stakeholders on issues related to food aid programming in Sudan. Following on from the Forum, WFP Sudan approached the Center to undertake this review. This document constitutes the report of the review.

Objectives of the Review

The overall objective of WFP in this study is to make improvements in programming in the 2007 EMOP and the subsequent PRRO. The overall objective of the Feinstein International Center is to build the knowledge base for improved humanitarian programming and policy generally. The FIC views this review as an important first step in the process of building a partnership with WFP Sudan—one of the largest humanitarian operations in the world. The hypothesis of the Center is that a comprehensive review of the existing information will inform improved decision making.

The specific objectives of this study of WFP food assistance programs in Southern Sudan through a desk review of existing documentation were to:

- Build knowledge for improved programming in the 2007 EMOP and subsequent PRRO;
- Identify the positive and negative results of the distribution of food aid since 1998;
- Review a number of operational issues including information systems, targeting and timing of food assistance, and food distribution modalities.

The issues to be reviewed relate to food aid programs include the changing socio-political and economic context in Sudan in general and in Southern Sudan in particular; the impact of food aid on food security and livelihoods (including nutritional status); the impact of food aid on household care practices, labor allocation, and resource access and control; the impact on community-based or indigenous safety nets; the impact on migration and displacement; the impact on labor markets, trade and commodity markets; and other unintended impacts of food aid.

The agreed emphasis of the study is on identifying obvious problems; identifying areas in which there is consensus in terms of where WFP programs should move; identifying areas in which there is clear disagreement among stakeholders; and identifying areas in which there is not solid knowledge or information on which to base good programmatic decisions.

Organization of the Report

Section II of the report briefly reviews the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to set the background for the rest of the report. The substantive review is presented in Sections III and IV. These go beyond the list of topics specified in the contractual agreement, to include issues emerging in the review itself. Recommendations are in Section V. Several Annexes include a complete listing of documentation reviewed, a brief timeline of major events influencing food security in Southern Sudan, and the methods used in this review.

Limitations of the Report

This report is limited to a discussion of the WFP program in Southern Sudan. While there are obvious links to the crises in both Northern Uganda and Darfur, this report does not try to deal with those crises. Several further points regarding the limitations of this report should be noted.

First, it is relatively straightforward to make observations on the basis of documentary review, but it is very difficult to get to real causes through a review alone. The evidence base in some cases is extremely weak or fleeting, even where topics are discussed in WFP internal reporting or external documentation. But in some cases, topics and particularly causal factors related to many of our observations aren't even discussed. In the absence of being able to interview key decision makers and participants, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on some issues.

Second, there is extensive external documentation on the Bahr el Ghazal famines of 1998, its causes and impacts, and its aftermath. But there is a fairly large gap in external documentation after the time this analysis ended. Thus much of what can be reviewed about food insecurity and the impact of food aid in Southern Sudan is actually about events that took place eight years ago. While still arguably relevant, there is a limitation to the extent to which this experience can or should inform post-CPA transitional programming. Thus we have tried to divide the section on recommendations into two parts, one dealing with on-going emergency response, and another on transitional programming. The evidence base for the latter is considerably less robust.

Third, much of the WFP documentation is not specific to Southern Sudan. Location-specific information can be obtained from the Annual Needs Assessment (ANA), since it is mainly contained in one document that is broken down by geographic areas of the country. It is much more difficult to track program planning, implementation and evaluation because these documents are country wide and do not break down results by geographic area. In the absence of being able to conduct interviews it is often not possible to say anything specific about plans for, or impact in, Southern Sudan on the basis of the EMOP documents or the SPRs.

Fourth, there has been a fairly polarized debate between WFP and some of its critics around information systems, analysis and programming in Southern Sudan. This has been very helpful in identifying where further substantive empirical field work is necessary, but in the absence of field work, it is not possible to completely resolve the issues of contention.

This report therefore should be taken as suggestive of major issues, and highlighting the need for better evidence on many topics the report discusses. While it would be preferable to have good evidence on all questions to inform better decision at the policy and program level, this report tries to prioritize requirements for better evidence.

The Changing Context in Southern Sudan

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement

On January 9, 2005 the long-running war that the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) had been waging against the Government of Sudan (GoS) since 1983 finally came to an end with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA provided for a six-year interim period, with nationwide elections at all levels (expected in 2008) and an autonomous regional government in Southern Sudan dominated by the SPLM. The planned 2011 referendum for Southern self-determination will allow people in the South to choose to become an independent state or remain united with Northern Sudan. The SPLA is to remain a separate army alongside the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), with both parties establishing SPLA/SAF Joint Integrated Units (JIU's) in the south, Khartoum, and the three areas of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States. The CPA mandated a wide array of power and wealth sharing agreements between the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) and the SPLM. These provisions, which included giving SPLM the office of the First Vice President of the Republic and some veto and consultative authority, were aimed at addressing decades of political and economic marginalization of the South and convincing Southern voters of the benefits of continued unity (ICG 2006).

Nearly two years on, implementation of the CPA is beset with numerous challenges. The CPA is an agreement between only two parties, the SPLM and the NCP, and continues to lack wider support in other parts of the country. Due to the exclusion of other parties and armed groups from the negotiations, there is little commitment on the part of these groups to the provisions of the CPA and a heightened risk of further insecurity as they take up arms in pursuit of power sharing (HRW 2006). So far, despite the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU), the reforms mandated by the CPA have yet to be implemented. NCP has retained control of the most influential ministries, such as the defense ministry and the much contested energy ministry, and the ministries that the SPLM did receive had been considerably weakened through structural changes imposed by the NCP. Several key commissions, including the Human Rights Commission, the Petroleum Commission, the Land Commission, and the National Civil Service Commission, have not yet been established and there has been little SPLM integration into national institutions or civil services (ICG 2006). Based on the lackluster performance of the CPA since January 2005, the pattern appears to be that the NCP is taking advantage of the organizational weakness of the SPLM so as to undermine the implementation process and retain its grip on power (ICG 2006).

The death of SPLM Chairman Dr. John Garang in July 2005 was a major blow to the SPLM, which continues to face enormous challenges in functioning as an effective partner in the GNU and in establishing a working government in Southern Sudan. Although some resources from oil revenues are now available to the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), it continues to lack the infrastructure and capacity needed to harness these resources for development. Extensive delays in paying SPLA soldiers have been reported, leading to a tense security situation in the South. Furthermore, low morale among SPLA troops have contributed to increased incursions into Western and Central Equatoria by the Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) disrupting relief, refugee repatriation and development activities there (HRW 2006; ICG 2006).

Return and Recovery

There has been considerable population movement in the form of return and resettlement since the CPA marked an end to the conflict in Southern Sudan. Between January and April 2006, for example, the UN and the GoSS organized the return of approximately 40,000 people, in addition to spontaneous return that has been on-going since 2004. UNHCR has also signed tripartite agreements with Sudan and five countries of asylum to begin repatriating Sudanese refugees: it is estimated that 12,000 people will be repatriated by September and 58,000 by December (UNMIS 2006). In addition to the distribution of non-food item (NFI) packages to vulnerable households in high return areas, returnees are being supported with food aid and agricultural inputs. Due to the higher than projected returnee figures in the Three Areas and particularly in Abyei, however, WFP was forced to reduce per capita rations by 25% (UNMIS 2006). Without adequate support, the large influx of returnees combined with the degree of poverty in the areas to which they are returning could result in a breakdown of the process, new aid dependence and increased tensions caused by competition for scarce resources. It is particularly important that during the rainy season, high return areas such as Northern Bahr el Ghazal state should be closely monitored so that any deterioration in the humanitarian situation can be promptly identified and addressed (UNMIS 2006). Timely assistance is necessary in order to enable communities to absorb large numbers of returnees without falling victim to further food insecurity and vulnerability, but questions have been raised about the validity of ways in which food aid needs have been calculated for returnees (Sharp 2006).

Now that relative stability has returned to many areas in Southern Sudan, the causes of food insecurity could shift. Currently the most food insecure areas are those that were greatly affected by the war, and whose populations are currently feeling the strain of supporting the return, resettlement and reintegration of those that were displaced. Poor residents of these areas now have to compete with returnees for work, off-farm products and petty trade, and support from relatives. Markets are also affected as increased demand for grain results in increased grain prices. Returnees who are being taken care of by relatives or host families are better able to be absorbed into the community; however, they still face the challenges of accessing land for agriculture and lack of skills as a result of having been displaced for up to 20 years, often in urban or peri-urban areas. There is also evidence that some if not most of the people who are returning are either not going directly home or are unable to stay. Instead, they end up on the periphery of urban and market centers where they are better able to find cash income and services, but are less likely to be supported by relatives or residents (Matus 2006). The level of return will continue to be variable and dependent on the prevailing political, socio-economic and humanitarian conditions in return areas as well as push factors in Khartoum state and other sending areas, so operational humanitarian assistance plans need to remain somewhat flexible (WFP ANA 2006).

Matus' (2006) analysis of the Three Areas projects widening geographic and socio-economic disparities as poorer households mainly invest their labor to cover food and cash needs, thus limiting their ability to make more long-term productive investments. Increased urbanization is also likely as people move to urban areas and market towns in search of job, food and services. The downside is that people are without their social networks in urban areas and are thus more vulnerable. There is also increased potential for resource-based conflict, particularly in the context of high expectations faced with the slow implementation of the CPA. Competition for resources is likely to increase due to the numbers of returnees, environmental degradation and expanding commercial investment, and could result in the outbreak of violent conflict (Matus 2006). These observations likely apply to the whole of Southern Sudan.

The signing of the CPA heralded the promise of peace to the long-suffering people of Southern Sudan. However, without full commitment of the NCP to comply with the provisions of the agreement, and the strengthening of the GoSS and reform of the SPLA, continued peace and stability are by no means assured. While the UN Mission (UNMIS) planned for a 10,000 person- strong team devoted to monitoring the CPA, the ongoing crisis in Darfur has deflected international attention and there appears to be little political will on the part of the international community to hold parties accountable for the lack of progress in implementation (ICG 2006). The ongoing return and recovery process also has the potential to create tensions and conflict in return areas through increased competition for scarce resources and pressure on already vulnerable communities. Thus, the context in which relief and recovery activities in Southern Sudan are being conducted remains unstable and is likely to deteriorate if the problems in CPA implementation and the lack of capacity of the GoSS are not addressed.

Implications for Programming

Although food production has increased in Southern Sudan, there is no real “peace dividend” yet in terms of lowered food insecurity or malnutrition. The enormous task of livelihood recovery for the millions of people who were displaced and otherwise affected by the war may absorb a large portion of the financial revenues earmarked for Southern Sudan from the oil sector (WFP ANA 2006). WFP plans to provide returnees with 15-day transit rations at key stations, followed by a three-month standard return package—a plan criticized by some observers (LAF 2006). With the exception of the initial standard package, however, WFP assisted return programs will focus on communities rather than specific groups so as to minimize the risk of tension and to facilitate reintegration. The hope is to minimize free food distribution and move to developmental programming as soon as possible (WFP EMOP 2006). The Livelihoods Analysis Forum (LAF) however fears that targeting returnees could raise tensions between groups and disrupt commodity and labor markets (LAF 2006).

There have been some promising developments since the CPA. Existing markets are rapidly recovering and new markets are being established, which bodes well for increased food security (Sharp 2006). Although food aid will continue to be necessary at times as an emergency life-saving measure, ample opportunity now exists to strengthen local economies to function better in support of people’s livelihoods. With the signing of the CPA and the relative peace and security now prevailing in Southern Sudan, WFP has a unique opportunity to decide on its core function and role. The cost of food delivery in Southern Sudan has been extremely high, so cutting down on high cost deliveries should enable funding for other kinds of interventions. Ensuring food security by strengthening livelihood-based programming is a strategy that should become increasingly central to WFP’s work as it transitions from an emergency to a recovery paradigm (Feinstein International Center 2006).

Summary of Major Issues Emerging from the Review

From the Terms of Reference, and a quick first read of the available documentation, several issues quickly appeared to be the most critical for review and comparison. These included changes in the food security situation in the post-CPA context; the impact of food aid on food security and particularly understanding the stubbornly high prevalence of acute malnutrition in Southern Sudan; information systems and the linkage between information systems and programming; and the timing, targeting, and distribution of food aid in Southern Sudan.

The evidence of change in food security trends in the post-CPA era is fairly clear. Production trends are improved, markets and road infrastructure are improving, and there is generally an optimistic sense of improved overall food availability and marketing. On the other hand, Southern Sudan is a huge place, infrastructure is underdeveloped, and large deficits remain in some geographic areas—particularly the most isolated and those most vulnerable to drought, flooding, and other shocks. So overall improved production has yet to improve food access, particularly for poor and vulnerable groups in Southern Sudan. And the levels of vulnerability are likely to increase in the short term as the return of refugees and internally displaced people continues. Ensuring the recovery of livelihoods of both returnees and those who were left vulnerable by two decades of war is clearly the longer-term priority, and a number of recommendations in Section V are oriented towards this objective. It should be noted however, that most of these recommendations are only loosely based on the review of the literature, since there is not much literature to review on post-war recovery in Southern Sudan. Most of these recommendations result from papers presented to the Food Aid Forum in Khartoum in June, 2006 (Feinstein International Center 2006). Given the continued high levels of vulnerability and food insecurity in Southern Sudan, there is also clearly the on-going need for emergency preparedness and response and there of course is ample evidence to review with regard to this question (WFP ANA 2006; Feinstein International Center 2006)

An important issue that emerged from the review, and for which there was really no comparison with an external literature, is the issue of organizational learning. This review began with the task of looking at the evidence on technical issues. As we went through the review, it became apparent that some issues had less to do with technical competence than with institutional memory and institutional capacity to put lessons learned into practice. Thus, while this issue didn't appear in the matrix in Table 1, a sub-section is devoted to this topic here.

A sub-section is devoted to each of the major issues raised above in the remainder of this section. Some other issues emerged that seem to be either less important or less well understood, and those are reviewed in the following section.

Information Systems and Analysis

There has been a good deal of controversy, and a fairly polarized debate, over the question of the information system in place, the quality of information produced, the frameworks in which the information is analyzed, and the linkage of the information to operational decision making (both in WFP Sudan and in donor agencies). After seven or eight years of service, the Technical Support Unit (TSU) in Lokichoggio was phased out in 2002-2003, and was replaced by the Vulnerability Assessment Unit (VAM). The TSU was built on the Food Economy Analysis (FEA) model, developed by Save the Children UK. At about the same time,

the SSCSE was phased in (in partnership with the Livelihoods Analysis Forum). In 2007 a new information system, SIFSIA, will also be introduced, in an attempt to integrate existing systems.

The 2004 FAO/WFP Technical Review noted that donors criticize the ANA process for over-estimation of needs (FAO/WFP 2004). Although the Technical Review did not say so explicitly, the implication is that this is the reason for late and partial response by donors. The Technical Review also noted that the 2002-03 ANA was based on assumptions of bumper harvest and targeted distribution, but the harvest wasn't as good as predicted and distributions weren't targeted given the nature of social relations—thus the ration size for vulnerable people was too small. As described by the Technical Review, problems with the existing WFP information system included:

- The Annual Needs Assessment is a one-off exercise—there is a need for better year-round monitoring.
- Data for CFSAM and the ANA is fragmentary.
- Although HEA (Household Economy Analysis, as Food Economy Analysis was renamed) was used for seven years, it was never able to develop into a real monitoring system—it remained based on a series of one-off assessments.
- HEA increased understanding of coping, but didn't help determine when coping became destructive.
- HEA depended on good demographic (population) data which is not available (this lack of population data hampers all estimations, not just HEA).
- Under HEA, key informants learned to give the “right” answers, diluting the validity of the findings.
- There has been no standardization of assessments.
- The current information system takes no account of protection /security issues and suffers from poor contextual analysis.
- Nutritional status is the only impact measure implied in the EMOP—but there is no measurement system in place, and food is only one input to good nutrition (see section on nutrition).
- There are big issues around capacity building, coordination, data collection and analysis, dissemination and planning.

Several additional points could be added:

- When HEA ceased to be the analytical framework for assessments, it isn't clear what replaced it.
- Redistribution of food aid makes end-use and impact monitoring difficult and makes targeting efforts somewhat moot.
- There is insufficient in-house analysis of political and security trends and the political economy of Southern Sudan (Feinstein International Center 2006). This need not follow the model of external political analysis such as the International Crisis Group or Human Rights Watch, but information already gathered through internal security monitoring, or information from food monitors. Despite conflict as a major source of vulnerability in Southern Sudan, even in the post-CPA era, conflict early warning has never been fully integrated into existing information systems.

The 2004 Special Report added to this by noting that the ANA is not accurate because it doesn't discuss inaccessible places and is food-biased. The Special Report suggests that information systems should be lighter and more iterative. It notes that both USAID and EC think WFP tends to overstate needs and is

food-biased. The Special Report as well as many other documents note the need for better nutritional surveillance—this was first mentioned in the 2003 EMOP; it was partially implemented (in Darfur, not in the South) in 2005 and mentioned again in the 2006 EMOP. It suggested that WFP partner with UNICEF to monitor nutritional status and that end-use monitoring should be beefed up. The Special Report also notes that there was inadequate ability to measure other things related to EMOP objectives like stress migration, supporting the peace process, and commitment to women. Finally, there is insufficient monitoring of food security at the household level to say much about the impact of food aid. Monitoring capacity remained a huge challenge (WFP Special Report 2004).

External critics echo many of these issues. There is a lack of information and analytical consensus about the period of the year when food aid needs are the greatest; a sense that food aid appeals have grown out of proportion to real needs; and a disagreement over shortfalls in production and need between WFP and its critics (Livelihoods Analysis Forum 2006). The big increase in food aid appeals for 2006 in the context of good harvest, notwithstanding some uncertainty about the rate of IDP and refugee return, is a case in point (Sharp 2006). In addition, current information and analytical systems don't adequately take non-food requirements into consideration. The TSU was disbanded in 2002-03, which coincides with the period when appeals began to shoot up at a sustained rate of nearly 20KMT per year for several years, but donor response largely didn't change (see following section).

In the absence of interviewing, it isn't clear how these differences should be reconciled. It also isn't clear how the various components of the existing information system are intended to work together. But several conclusions can be drawn.

First, there is a clear gap between appeals and actual amount received (see section on timing and targeting of food aid). This underscores the observation in the WFP 2004 Special Report that donors don't believe the needs assessment figures. When these yawning gaps between appeals and actual amounts take place, without any apparent impact on malnutrition or mortality, donors tend to take it as evidence that they are right. But there is little specific monitoring of livelihoods or assets directly related to this question, so there is no way of knowing whether people are divesting themselves to protect what remains of food security in years of under-coverage, or if the needs estimates really were over-stated, and the donors were right to chop the appeals down. This issue needs to be addressed, and should be incorporated into the planning for SIFSIA.

Second, it is clear that there is no mechanism for monitoring the main intended and unintended effects of food aid. On the side of monitoring intended impacts, the lack of a nutritional surveillance system has been noted, and is discussed in the following section. On the side of unintended impacts, there is no mechanism for monitoring markets—particularly grain markets. With both over-runs in deliveries (which would be expected to dampen prices) and local purchase (which would be expected to drive prices up) there are potential issues that could worsen the food security of different groups, depending on impact. Sometime in late 2006, there will be a Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessment carried out in Southern Sudan. This will give important baseline information and should improve the analysis of on-going monitoring information. The linkage to SIFSIA is important to think about with regard to the CFSVA. Likewise, it is hoped that SIFSIA will incorporate monitoring of market impacts, and of other unintended impacts of food aid, in addition to monitoring the operating context.

Third, at the moment, there is at best questionable real-time information about returns—not a WFP problem per se, but WFP is affected by it. And there are poor links between the existing information system and the targeting and timing of food aid.

And fourth, there is clearly a strong difference of views between LAF and WFP over both the organization of the existing information/analysis system and the results that the system produces. The Tufts team is not in the position to resolve this disagreement, particularly in the absence of field visits. But these disagreements are serious, and regardless of who is “right,” these disagreements have an impact on WFP credibility and the credibility of the humanitarian community generally. Some of these problems appear to be related to technical issues and the analytical framework; some appear to be issues of communication. There is an urgent need to resolve these differences—particularly now that a new system is also coming along (SIFSIA). And there is a strong need to get nutritional surveillance (and improved analysis of nutritional data) up and running in Southern Sudan as quickly as possible.

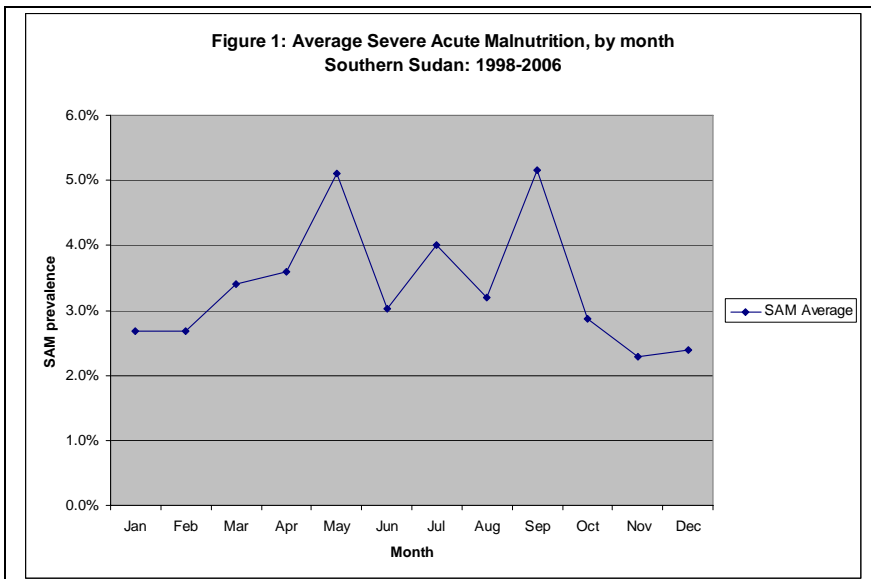
Addressing Malnutrition in Southern Sudan

The objective of the WFP EMOP covering Southern Sudan for the past eight years has always been to reduce (or contain) Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM), and at some point a target of maintaining the prevalence GAM at or below 15% of children under the age of 5 years was set. However, two major points emerge from this review that make it extremely difficult to judge what impact WFP programs have had on the prevalence of GAM in Southern Sudan. The first is that there has never been an overall monitoring mechanism to actually measure the prevalence of GAM in the affected area—the only measures of malnutrition result from one-off nutrition assessments by NGOs. The second issue is that there is considerable controversy over the causes of the persistently high prevalence of GAM—whether it is primarily a food problem or the result of a mix of food and non-food factors. While measuring the prevalence of GAM—and measuring the contribution of the EMOP to reducing or stabilizing the prevalence of GAM—are both extremely important, there remain deep disagreements over the extent to which a food-dominated response to malnutrition in Southern Sudan is appropriate. This review sheds some light on this question, but more in-depth empirical research is required to fully answer it.

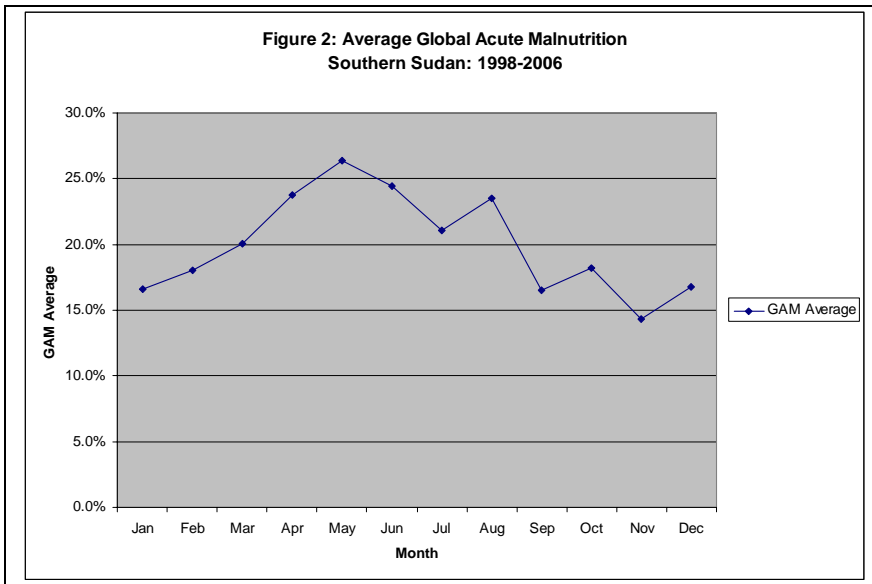
There is broad consensus that both Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) have remained well above the levels targeted by the EMOP (as indicated by NGO surveys), and well above the standards of international acceptability. Therefore, the EMOP appears to be falling short in one of its primary objective year after year. There have been repeated suggestions in recent years that a nutritional surveillance system should be set up in Southern Sudan, in collaboration between UNICEF, WFP, and national institutions, but to date, this had not happened. In the absence of any such mechanism, the only evidence on which to draw any conclusions is the series of one-off nutritional surveys that are done, but these vary significantly in their objectives, their rationale, and in their methodology—and at best give only a partial picture of overall malnutrition. This section attempts to address these issues, in order to make recommendations for the way forward. In doing so, we have aggregated the prevalence point data from single site studies by year and month, to attempt to chart trends. These data were availed to us by the Livelihoods Analysis Forum, which aggregated the results of 206 individual nutrition surveys between 1998 and mid 2006. See Table 2 for the results of this aggregation.

There are all kinds of methodological problems with undertaking analysis which aggregates single studies, and there is a distinct limit to how much can really be understood about the dynamics of malnutrition through a series of one-off 30*30 cluster surveys:

- First, aggregating these results across time and space clearly violates methodological good practice, but it is the only way to try to see annual “trends” on a calendar basis. Aggregating single prevalence point data in this manner doubtlessly masks locally specific situations, but there simply is little trend data—not even for a single location, much less the whole of Southern Sudan.
- Second, short of obtaining and reviewing each of several hundred individual survey reports, the available information doesn’t indicate whether these data were collected or reported in the same manner (i.e. as z-scores, percentages of the median, etc.).
- Third, there is some likelihood that looking only at the results of these surveys probably over-states the prevalence of GAM, since presumably at least some of these studies are done if there is a reason to suspect a nutritional problem (there is no indication that any of these are part of a regular surveillance system—though some of them may be). So there are all kinds of methodological problems here. But, in the absence of any better information, this is all there is to look at.



Data Source: Livelihoods Analysis Forum



Data Source: Livelihoods Analysis Forum

However, if one does this kind of analysis, for either Southern Sudan as a whole, or for a specific livelihood zone (the latter preferably, since at least this is limiting the analysis to a specific livelihood context, rather than a political entity), the results appear in Figures 1 and 2. Several points need to be noted here:

- GAM appears to spike in May, and again in August
- SAM follows the same general pattern with another spike in September. The GAM spike in August would make sense from a food-driven explanation of malnutrition, although the April one makes less sense from a “food explanation” perspective
- The rainy season is from May through September, the “green” harvest would be in September, and the main grain harvest would be in October and November.

In the controversy surrounding the interpretation of nutritional results, one thing everyone can agree is that the clear peak in GAM (which of course is child malnutrition) does not correspond to what is widely believed to be the peak of the hunger season, which is generally thought to peak in July/August. There are several possible reasons for this:

- The humanitarian community still doesn’t actually understand hunger season dynamics—maybe the hunger season peaks earlier than was thought.
- The spike in GAM may be driven more by non-food factors—water, health, care, women’s work load, etc.—than by the inadequate diet associated with the hunger season, which is essentially the point made by Sharp (2006).
- Perhaps something is driving child malnutrition down at the time that general food insecurity is increasing (particularly in pastoral areas, milk would be available at the beginning of the rainy season and milk might be targeted specifically to children, but “green” harvest or grain products wouldn’t be available for several more months).
- It could be the result of food budgeting practices—basically consumption smoothing to ensure that some grain remains for the real hunger season, in effect creating an earlier decline in food availability at the household level.

In the absence of good consumption data tied to who is consuming what, it is not possible to sort out this kind of relationship. Determinants of malnutrition have been explored qualitatively in Southern Sudan (Concern 2006; ACF 2004). In the absence of good causal analysis including indicators for food security and current health status, it is difficult to interpret the main constraints to good child nutrition. Good causal analysis and good tracking indicators are important pre-requisites to being able to interpret high levels of malnutrition and make well-informed programmatic decisions. Yet neither is in place in Southern Sudan.

The other, related question is around the impact of food aid on the prevalence of malnutrition. At face value, the impact appears to be not very much. Again, several reasons why this might be:

- The malnutrition problem is being driven by something else—not a food problem per se. Note, however, that few if any nutritionists think you could have such a high prevalence of acute malnutrition, and for such sustained periods, in the absence of an underlying food problem (Young and Jaspars 2006). Ultimately, there are multiple causes of malnutrition—programmatically, it is important to be able to understand the critical constraints in a given situation, and have the flexibility to respond accordingly.
- The timing of food aid delivery is hampered by logistical constraints, late arrivals, and poor infrastructure—so food arrives at the wrong time, in the wrong amounts, and isn’t available at the time it is really needed to have a major impact on malnutrition. See the following section below on timing of distributions.
- Distribution (and redistribution) dynamics are such that what food is available at the right time is not reaching the most vulnerable people (including children) in the amount needed to control GAM.

There is little doubt that the timing and distribution dynamics have long been a problem in Southern Sudan (WFP various; Sharp 2006; Harrigan 1998). Some analysts (Sharp 2006) advise that blanket distribution (i.e. to everybody in affected areas) should take place in the late dry season, to allow individuals to stockpile (“pre-position”) their own requirements for the hunger season; and so that redistribution dynamics will not restrict the most vulnerable from getting what they need.

Despite repeated recommendations about setting up nutritional surveillance, there is no central repository of nutritional information on Southern Sudan and no on-going monitoring. Information for this review came from LAF and from WFP, although the LAF data was much more extensive. WFP data included all of Sudan, but did not include some of the studies in the LAF collection, although the overlap was fairly complete. There was some sort of nutritional surveillance started in Darfur in 2005. This has not yet extended to cover the south.

Viewed on an annual basis (again, a grossly oversimplified way of looking at GAM prevalence based on one-off 30*30 cluster surveys), is there a link between known major food crises and malnutrition? Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2. Average Prevalence of GAM in 30*30 Nutrition Assessments (By year 1998-2006)			
Year	Average GAM*	Significant food crisis this year?	Number of studies
1998	19.50%	Bahr el Ghazal famine, excess mortality estimated at 70,000 people	4**

1999	17.07%	Recovery year, but the crisis of 1998 meant a much lower harvest than usual	18
2000	15.91%	No	13
2001	21.59%	Insecurity in Bahr el Ghazal, but good harvest in 2000	31
2002	24.63%	Good harvest, but insecurity in much of South—escalating conflict as peace talks proceed	31
2003	20.99%	Reduced harvest in 2002, food aid needs up 25%. Delays in shipments slow down response	30
2004	18.50%	Good harvest, but once again, delays and a break in the pipeline interfere with deliveries at the peak of the hungry season	30
2005	19.13%	Peace accord means end of war, but lower floods than usual in 2004 meant less wild foods, and more quickly depleted stocks in 2005	30
2006	19.69%	Bumper harvest reported in 2005. Yet record high levels of food aid are being delivered (?)	18

Data Source: Livelihoods Analysis Forum

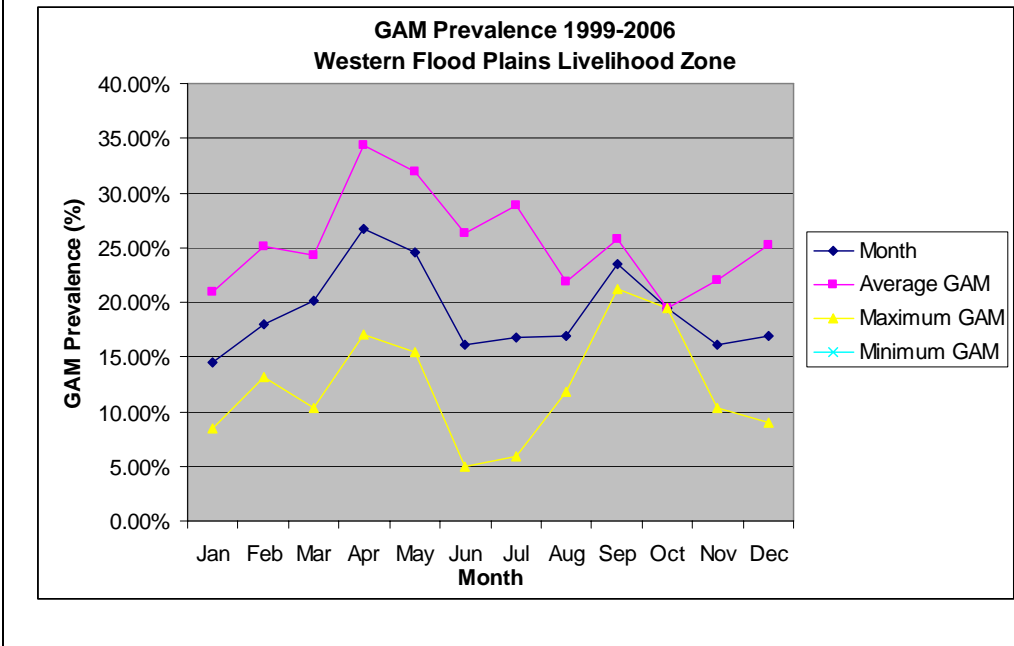
* Simple arithmetic mean of all estimates of the prevalence of GAM reported during a given year. This is not really a legitimate estimate of average prevalence—it is simply the only data available.

** Undoubtedly more would be found if a thorough search were done, and many of these would show a much higher prevalence of GAM.

Hence at face value, there is little correlation between the average GAM rate reported and the overall contextual reporting on the South. Later analysis will show a similar disconnect between the level of deliveries that was planned and the actual deliveries. This also bears little correlation to the GAM prevalence.

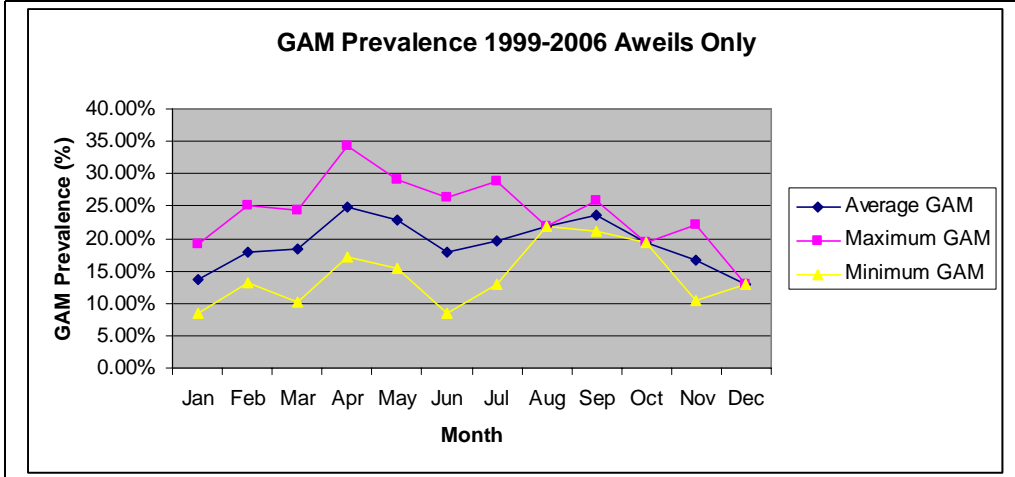
However, this comparison is at such a level of generality that it could mask a lot of local variation. To look at this problem a little more closely, Figure 3 and 4 focus in on only the Western Flood Plain livelihood zone, or on the Aweils.

Figure 3



Data Source: Livelihoods Analysis Forum

Figure 4



Data Source: Livelihoods Analysis Forum

In both cases, the general trend is more or less similar to that of all of Southern Sudan, with spikes in April, July and September, and more apparent variance during the early rainy season (at least more variation between maximum and minimum levels).

To put more light on this, the data for food deliveries to Southern Sudan for various years, by month, is found in the following section. There is little doubt that food plays a critical role in the determination of nutritional status. But there are obviously other non food factors that are influencing the high prevalence of malnutrition, causing it to remain static and sometimes go up despite WFP deliveries of food to these populations.

There have been no regional or countrywide studies done by WFP or anyone else to establish the causes of malnutrition. While there are many causes of malnutrition, it is difficult to separate out the exact causes in a given situation in the absence of hard data. Studies done by Concern, (2005) and ACF-USA (2004) tried to establish the causes of malnutrition in some parts of Southern Sudan, based on the UNICEF conceptual framework for malnutrition. Though these studies are important and useful, they are area-specific (Old Fangak in Upper Nile by ACF, and Aweil West and North Counties and Bahr el Ghazal by Concern) and they are not based on multivariate quantitative analysis so it is hard to determine the binding constraints to nutrition, even for a specific location. There is need for a more representative, quantitative study to be done. For the purpose of this review, the existing evidence is briefly discussed below.

Disease and healthcare. Disease is an immediate cause of malnutrition. Poor nutritional status makes a person susceptible to disease, increases the susceptibility to and duration of disease and therefore contributes to the risk of mortality. Yet at the same time disease plays a part in the deterioration of nutritional status. Illnesses and diseases seem to have an impact on the nutritional status of children in the South. The Concern Survey (2005) showed that the prevalence of SAM peaked at about 2.3% between August and November in 2005 compared to 1.2% in February. This corresponds to the peak in the incidence of malaria, which peaks between June and October; and diarrhea, which increases with the advance of the dry season, due most likely to a reduction in quantity and quality of water. So disease could be playing an important causal role in malnutrition. A similar survey carried out by Tear Fund (2004) showed that GAM levels were lower in Aweil East than in Aweil North. The assumption was that the East had better quality medical care than Aweil North. Poor health services coupled with poor quality water and poor sanitation are associated with the incidence of disease and hence rates of malnutrition.

Child care practices. Women's workload in Southern Sudan is extremely heavy. It involves collection of water, caring for children, grinding grain, working on farms, collection of fuel wood, food preparation, and even collection of relief food. Thus many duties compete with child care which is not always seen as the first priority. In fact, older children, grandparents, or other relatives often oversee the welfare of the children while the mother attends to other tasks. Usually the care provided by these caretakers is less than that provided by the mother.

During land preparation, at the beginning of April, the prevalence of malnutrition tends to go up. Ironically, there is evidence of low enrollment in supplementary feeding programs by women during this period (Concern 2005). Child care is apparently a lower priority at this point as they seek to have their farms ready. It is important to note that this is also the period just before the rains so most rivers and wells are dry, requiring women to walk longer distances to fetch water.

Weaning practices also may play an important role in causing malnutrition. Children between 5-29 months represent the biggest group of malnourished children due to some of these practices (ACF 2004). Milk and water are sometimes introduced to children even before the age of six months. As already noted, women do not have the time to fully take care of their children and this negatively impacts recently weaned children the most.

Women's role in preventing malnutrition. WFP has been targeting women for their micro-projects and they want women to be the majority of the beneficiaries from these projects. Though this initiative may be aimed

at increasing the income of women and hence empowering them, there have been questions as to whether this is not increasing the workload of the already overburdened women and encroaching on their time (Rogers and Coates 2002). Although women have been specifically targeted for food aid, there is no evidence that this has changed their status or position. Limited educational opportunities for women, and the resulting low levels of literacy, have a negative impact on female participation in decision-making and also on household-level food security. The school feeding programs that WFP supports is an important step forward in ensuring more girls are enrolled in schools, though questions remain about the quality of this education.

Drawing any firm conclusions from this analysis is difficult. But it would appear that the prevalence of wasting, or global acute malnutrition, has remained well above the internationally accepted cut-off point of 15% for defining a crisis for most if not all of the past eight years, at least in the areas of Southern Sudan for which we have data (obviously, at some times in some places, the prevalence falls well below 15%). Tentatively, the peak in child malnutrition does not seem to correspond to the peak in the hungry season, nor for that matter, the peak in disease incidence. While observers have posited several explanations for this, there is no representative, quantitative evidence on which firm conclusions can be based. Malnutrition this widespread and acute can hardly be thought to be independent of an underlying food security problem, but the extent to which the spikes in prevalence of wasting may be driven as much by non-food factors is still unknown. And even if the malnutrition is primarily driven by a food access problem, there is insufficient evidence at face value that more food aid is necessarily the best way to address the problem. Without doubt, a nutritional surveillance system, with the concomitant analytical capacity to understand the information coming from a surveillance system, would be a huge step forward in terms of being able to analyze the malnutrition problem in Southern Sudan. In the meantime, it is probably reasonable to suggest that other problems, including the timing and distribution of food aid, are important to address (see the next section), insofar as the distribution of food aid does not match either the peak in malnutrition or the hungry season.

The Targeting, Timing, and Delivery of Food Aid in Southern Sudan

The single most important factor in the management of food aid is ensuring that the required assistance gets to the people who need it, at the time they need it, in the quantity they need it and for the period of time that they need it—and conversely that food aid does not go to other people or at other times (Barrett and Maxwell 2005). Briefly, the task of targeting is defined by Table 2 below: reaching the genuinely food insecure (Cell 1) and not providing assistance to the genuinely food secure (Cell 4) is considered successful targeting. Providing food assistance to food secure households or individuals (Cell 2) is an inclusion error or leakage error, while not reaching the food insecure is an exclusion or under-coverage error. From a humanitarian point of view, WFP is most concerned about under-coverage errors; however from the point of view of the efficiency of resource utilization and not undermining local markets, leakage errors are the biggest concern.

	Food insecure	Food secure
Targeted	1. Successful targeting	2. Inclusion error (Leakage)
Not Targeted	3. Exclusion error (Under-coverage)	4. Successful targeting

From Barrett and Maxwell (2005), adapted from Hoddinott (1999)

This is obviously a difficult task under the best of circumstances, but there have been considerable problems with targeting in Southern Sudan over the years, for a number of reasons related to other sections of this review. First, information about actual need is difficult to obtain, particularly given the current information systems and analytical capabilities in place. Second, donors may not believe the information available, or for some other reason provide resources at the times required. Third, logistical constraints make it difficult to provide food at the precise times and places where it is needed.

Targeting, broadly speaking, is therefore not only a question of getting assistance to the right people—the “who?” and “how?” questions; but also involves a “where?” question, a “when?” question, a “what?” question, and a “for how long?” question. These will be addressed in the order outlined above. To a large degree, the “what” question was already addressed in the previous section. The others are addressed here.

Targeting the “vulnerable” in Southern Sudan: “who?” “where?” and “how?” While there is a general consensus in the literature that targeting is necessary for the allocation of scarce resources to those who need it most, most agree that this has not been a resounding success in Southern Sudan (SPLM/SRRA/OLS 1998; Harragin 1998; Jaspars 2000). Many of the problems with targeting stem from external and indigenous perceptions of vulnerability. In his study of vulnerability in Southern Sudan, Harragin (1998) found that the Dinka assist one another on the basis of kinship as opposed to economic vulnerability; hence, the most vulnerable are those lacking an adequate kinship structure to support them (e.g. individuals who have lost numerous family members through death or displacement), or people who are outside their kinship structure (e.g. IDPs).

As a result, while local people would appear to conform with the conditions of indicator targeting that have been imposed from the outside by aid agencies, they would end up redistributing the food aid to all sections of the population instead of only to those that had been targeted. Harragin (1998) argues that this practice of “sharing” stems from the egalitarian nature of Dinka society and that food aid is seen as a free resource that should be made available to all. The act of sharing also reinforces kinship networks (unlike targeting, which is seen to undermine traditional social structures), and removes the stigma that may be attached to being a beneficiary of charity. There is also the argument that targeting among people who are all extremely vulnerable is neither feasible nor ethical (Macrae et al. 1997).

The unanswered question however is whether beneficiary representatives or local institutions can be relied upon to distribute resources to the most vulnerable (Jaspars 2000). The views on this issue are mixed. The SPLM/SRRA/OLS task force (1998) found that certain groups were being consistently marginalized from food distributions, including displaced people without chief representation, families with a member in the feeding program, widows, and others at the low end of the social hierarchy. In addition to considerable diversion of food aid to the SPLA, SRRA and civil administration, the most powerful and richest clans

benefited the most from food aid and not those who were most vulnerable, i.e. people excluded from social networks. As the aims of traditional authorities relate more to maintaining social relationships and community cohesion rather than addressing inequity, the most food insecure people tend to also be the most marginalized and it is the socially and politically elite that benefit the most from community-based distribution (Matus 2006).

Harragin, however, argues that the kinship system is a “tried and tested famine survival mechanism” (1998:55) that does a good job of protecting the majority of the population as long as there are sufficient resources to go around. His solution therefore would be to ensure a generous early intervention rather than a targeted late one, and to distribute aid to all lineages in the area fairly according to numbers rather than need. The key is for aid agencies to select the appropriate chief to represent different groups (e.g. gol or lineage leader to target a lineage, or the sub chief to target a whole wut containing several lineages). Not only would this distribution system remove the stigma of ‘handouts,’ it also reaffirms the indigenous system of sharing and wealth distribution that sustains people in times of scarcity when there is no aid.

Harragin (1998) recognizes that aid diversion did take place and that certain groups such as the displaced were inadequately protected by the kinship structure, by virtue of their being outside of their social network. Regarding the first issue, he argues that local systems of accountability do exist as any abuse of assistance by lineage leaders would be considered an offense against accepted standards of Dinka behavior and tried in local courts. This observation is supported by the findings of Duffield et al. (2000), which state that although local people did not necessarily protest the diversion of food aid to the SPLA, the sale of relief items for personal enrichment has led to the removal of some commanders. The key is to understand the local principles that govern the distribution of aid and to observe the extent to which abuses of aid are reaching local courts (Harragin 1998). Local staff who understand local dynamics but are not directly involved in implementation can play an important monitoring role (Jaspars 2000). Agencies should also be careful not to make chiefs politically unassailable by giving them too much power so that they no longer need to be accountable to their own people. As for ensuring that the displaced do not get left out of relief distribution, Harragin (1998) recommends that relief provision build on the relationships that displaced people are attempting to create with the local population by distributing food aid to both groups. Paradoxically, the displaced are more likely to receive aid if there is an ethos of distribution to all. The displaced could also be given a big enough ration to facilitate their return home to their own kinship structures (Harragin 1998), or they could be identified and mobilized to select a representative who would then ensure that they were receiving their share of food aid (Jaspars 2000).

Programs with no evidence of diversion were those that had clear distribution criteria: children under five and the malnourished (Jaspars 2000). The frequent distribution of small quantities of food or the distribution of less desirable foods also reduced the likelihood of diversion. Other best practices for food aid distribution include: distribution to the smallest social unit (e.g. gol leader) in order to foster accountability; decentralizing distribution sites; and intensifying activities to ensure intended beneficiaries receive their rations (e.g. registration, monitoring, information dissemination), and in extreme cases, providing prepared food. Paying attention to location is vital when establishing distribution sites, as demonstrated by the case of food distributions in the Blue Nile Province of Southern Sudan in 1998-9, when certain affected groups were not able to access distribution centers because they were located within another group’s territory. It was also found that during the drought of 1998, food aid distribution through a central location remote from pastoral settlements had the unintended effect of weakening kinship and leadership structures. Dinka

sub-tribes that were located further from the central distribution site were less able to access rations, a problem that was remedied through an increase in the number of distribution centers located nearer to the territories of the sub-tribes (Harragin 1998).

Sharp (2006) notes that the conditions in Southern Sudan are appropriate for blanket (not targeted) distribution to all households at a critical time rather than distributing small amounts over an extended period to a smaller number of targeted beneficiaries. Harragin (1998) recommends political surveillance of Southern Sudan that would provide critical information on maps, population estimates and aid coverage.

WFP recognized some of the same issues as well. Following the findings of the SPLM/SRRA Joint Targeting and Vulnerabilities Task Force (1998), WFP undertook a consultancy with Susanne Jaspars to further explore issues around the targeting and distribution of food aid in SPLM controlled areas of Southern Sudan (1999). In WFP's response to Jaspars's recommendations, problems with the division of food that occurs before reaching the gol leader and problems with using the gol leader to distribute food aid were highlighted. WFP also pointed out that the partial solution of exclusively targeting those who are left out of social support networks could result in making them even more isolated. The WFP response acknowledged the need for WFP and local leaders to develop common definitions of vulnerability; however the proposed distribution system remained focused on committees. The 2004 Special Evaluation Report also recognized redistribution as a big issue. Relief committees do the initial targeting according to WFP criteria, but food is "normally voluntarily redistributed" (2004 Special Report: 27). The report went on to say that WFP needs to work with local traditions, but post distribution monitoring also shows diversion is reducing. Several authors (Sharp 2006; Harragin 1998; Harvey and Lind 2005) suggest providing beneficiaries with clearer information on the timing and organization of food distribution. This would be tied to the issue of blanket distributions. More reliable and transparent assistance, the argument goes, would then allow people to understand what they're entitled to and incorporate it into their livelihood strategies.

In conclusion, much of the external literature on targeting is rather old, and it isn't entirely clear how much the dynamics of vulnerability have shifted in the post-CPA era. In the absence of interviewing and observation, it also isn't clear how much the discussion of difficulties of targeting have affected actual practice in the field.

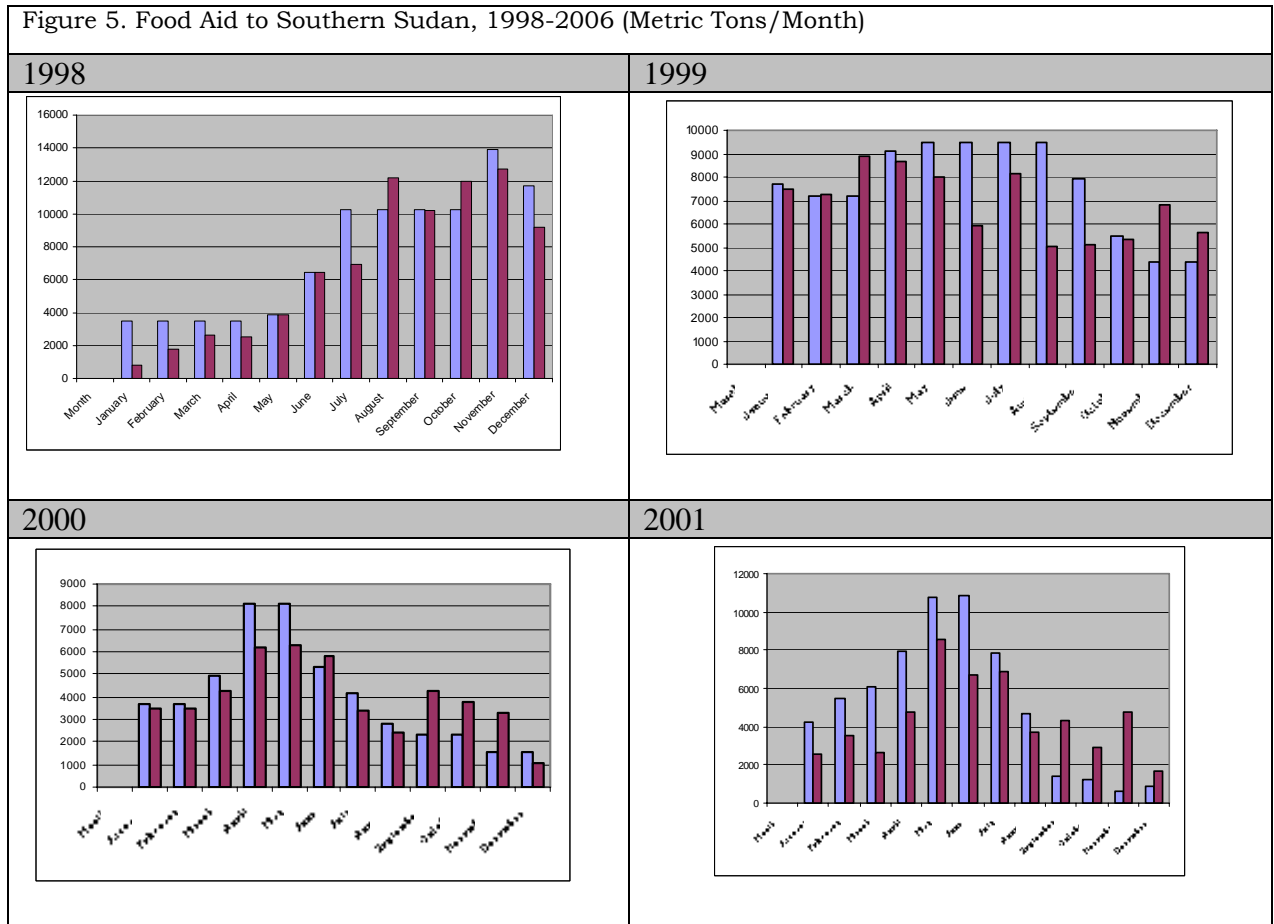
Timing of food aid deliveries: the "when?" and "for how long" questions. Figure 5 and Table 4 depict several crucial trends regarding the analysis of food insecurity, the assessment of needs, the planned and actual delivery of food and the timing of the distribution. Several trends are evident in the timing. The local seasonal calendar in Southern Sudan is somewhat variable, but generally the four-month period from May/June through August/September (depending on location) is considered the "hungry season" with rains beginning in late April in the south and in May farther north, and with the rains ending by September/October. The "green" harvest is usually in September, and the main harvest from October to December (Muchomba and Sharp 2006). The hungry season coincides with rains; the late dry season and early rainy season are times of highest agricultural labor requirements (see the "seasonal calendar" in the third annex).

Given this, the highest priority on provision of food should be in the months from May through September, but a cursory glance at Figure 5 indicates this is when the proportion of planned distributions are often the lowest; and in many years, actual amounts delivered have been lower in the "hungry season" than at other

times. There is some controversy over whether the height of the hungry season is the appropriate time to concentrate food deliveries, given that the highest prevalence of GAM tends to occur at the end of the dry season (there is also controversy over the extent to which those levels of GAM are primarily driven by inadequate food intake, or other factors related to health, child care and maternal labor requirements—see section on nutrition).

The other trend that is quickly evident in Figure 5 is that planned distribution levels are often exceeded late in the year when the rains stop and transportation presumably becomes easier. But this coincides with the main harvest, and is widely known to be the least propitious time of the year to have excess food aid being distributed. An internal WFP report in early 2004 (WFP Special Report 2004) brought this problem to light, and indeed the performance on this particular point in this particular year improved. But there were some overruns again in 2005, particularly on a localized basis. Surprisingly, there is little recognition in WFP's own reporting or monitoring that delivery over-runs at the time of harvest may have a detrimental dampening effect on commodity prices, and even more surprisingly, little criticism of WFP over this point by external analysts.

Figure 5. Food Aid to Southern Sudan, 1998-2006 (Metric Tons/Month)



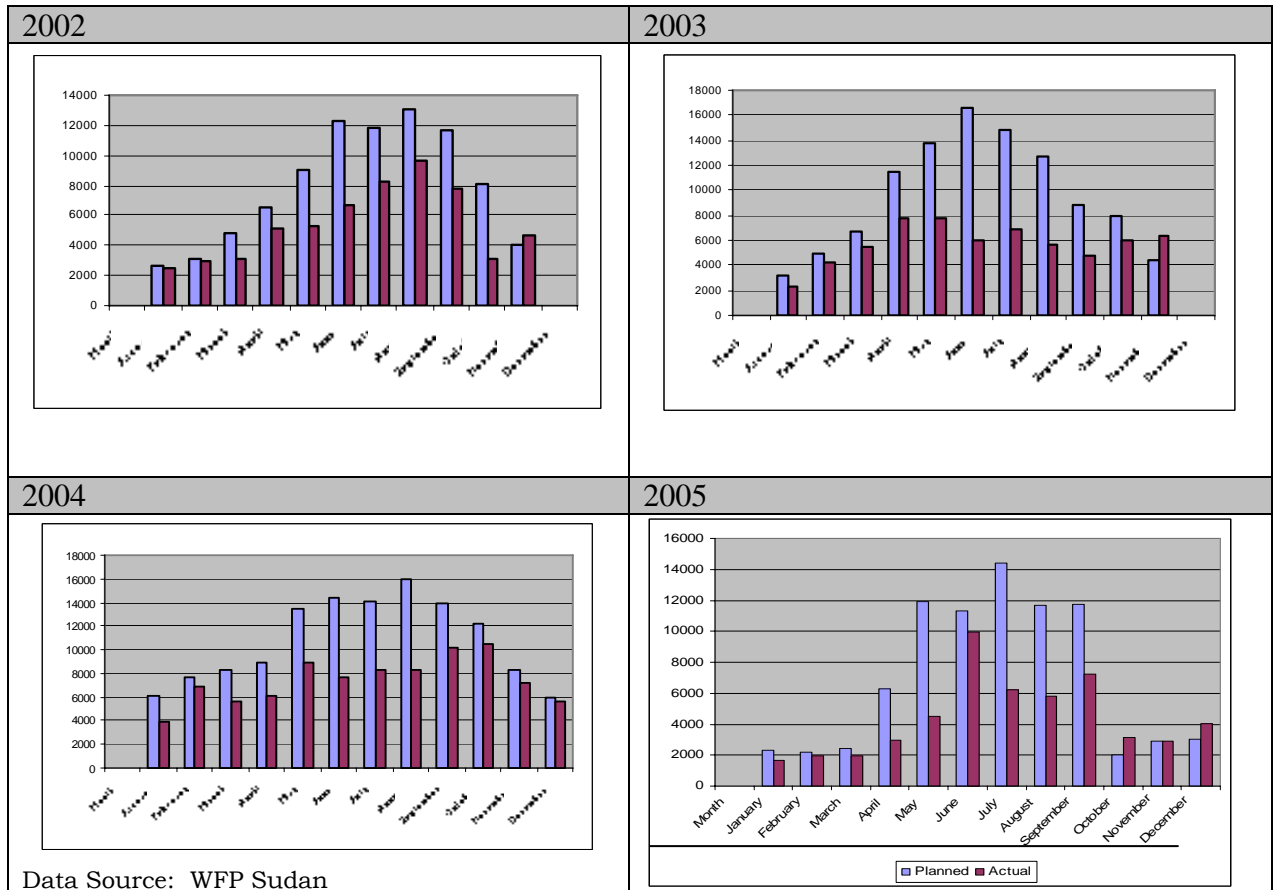


Table 4. Annual Total Food Aid to Southern Sudan – Planned and Actual (Metric Tons)

Year	Needs (ANA)	Planned (Operations)	Actual (Operations)	Percent of Plan (Operations)	Local Purchase (Entire Country)
1998	??	91,009	81,203	89%	“minimal”
1999	??	91,292	82,327	90%	30,000
2000	53,428	48,681	47,586	98%	??
2001	63,000	61,914	52,969	86%	0
2002	23,000*	82,283	58,944	68%	6,730
2003	57,000	105,463	63,154	60%	??
2004	??	129,059	89,326	69%	64,900
2005	175,000	82,178	52,304	64%	<1,000
2006	133,000				

Data Source: WFP Sudan

?: Annual Needs Assessment reports missing for 1998, 1999 and 2004

2002 Figure is the “food gap” from the CFSAM Report, not assessed need (ANA missing)

Thus it appears that serious under-coverage and leakage targeting errors are occurring as a result of the timing of food aid deliveries. As Table 4 makes clear, while actual amounts of food distributed in Southern Sudan have been relatively stable (with the exception of 2004), the planned deliveries increased on the order of 15-20 thousand metric tons per year between 2001 and 2005—from about 62,000 MT in 2001 to 129,000 in 2005. It is also apparent that the planning figures from Operations were significantly different from the Annual Needs Assessment figures, and actual deliveries fell far short of planned deliveries. This is no doubt at least in part because of a lot of competing emergencies in the region, and the Darfur emergency within Sudan. There were some bad years in Southern Sudan during this time, notably 2003 because of poor harvests in late 2002, and other years in specific locations depending on localized security conditions. But it is not clear from all the documentation reviewed that this kind of increase in planned tonnage was warranted. And, with the exception of 2004, donors apparently did not think so.

This is significant for several reasons: First it highlights the problems that external critics repeatedly mention with regard to information systems and the quality of information available to WFP Sudan and the capacity to accurately analyze this information. Second, it also highlights the fact that, as some of WFP's own internal reporting suggests, donors don't trust the figures that they get from WFP. Thus WFP's credibility has probably been undermined. Donors would likely point to the fact that, in spite of significant shortfalls in delivery against planned figures, there has been no significant increase in the prevalence of malnutrition or mortality. And nobody has good monitoring data on the extent to which livelihoods have been harmed over time if people have to sell assets or engage in other unsustainable coping strategies. In brief, the level of apparent disconnect between assessed figures, planning figures, FEWSNET monitoring reports, actual deliveries and the apparent outcomes of those deliveries make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. A few can be suggested:

First, the timing of food aid deliveries has improved somewhat since the 2004 Special Report, but is still far from conforming to plans. At least the regular over-delivery late in the year stopped in 2004. Second, it isn't clear whether pre-positioning during the dry season in the early part of the year in appropriate warehousing is possible, given the infrastructure in Southern Sudan, but it would clearly help address the timeliness of distribution. And third, by WFP's own reckoning, the major donors don't trust WFP planning figures. The largest donor is USAID, and USAID funds FEWSNET, so presumably it is the disconnect between FEWSNET reporting, WFP figures, and apparent outcomes that lies at the root of the donor trust issue.

Organizational Learning

Throughout this review, evidence emerged of the same problems recurring, or the same lessons learned turning up in SPRs. WFP Sudan works in a complex and varied operating environment, with relatively short turnover times for international staff. This makes organizational learning and institutional memory even more important, but the limited evidence suggests that organizational learning has been an obstacle. There is little said about this in most of the documentation reviewed—both internal and external. The evidence on organizational learning has to be ferreted out from the extent to which topics make it into reports: how much program or policy was reported to have changed and what impact these changes had.

Although there is no doubt a lot of internal discussion and debate over the topics mentioned below, very little of this makes it to the level of formal reporting. Formal reporting, in the form of Annual Needs

Assessment, EMOP documents, and SPRs, gives little insight into organizational learning. There is a very brief “lessons learned” section in Standardized Project Reports, beginning in about 2003 or 2004, but much of what is put here is either simply confirming that an operational decision was a good one, or else something so generic that it hardly counted as anything specifically learned. And in several cases, the same “lessons” are repeated in subsequent years—perhaps reflecting that “lessons learned” are simply a perfunctory reporting exercise; perhaps reflecting an inability to dig deeper into problems on an on-going basis; or perhaps just a lack of knowledge among “this year’s team” about what “last year’s team” had learned.

On some specific issues, while there appears to be organizational learning at some level, the linkage between that learning and changes in program is not clear. For example, there was a significant attempt by the NGO community and scholars to understand the indigenous perspective on vulnerability, on coping strategies, on “gifts” (as food aid was seen, at least in the Dinka community), and on the implications of all this for targeting, around the time of the Bahr el Ghazal famine (Harrigan, 1998; Biong 2002, Sharp 2006). WFP responded by commissioning a special study (Jaspars 1999). But while this report deals with the issues raised about targeting and distribution, it doesn’t appear to have had a major impact on how WFP actually went about targeting and distribution. Many of the same targeting and distribution questions were raised again in 2004 by the Special Evaluation, but even this doesn’t seem to have had much impact on operations. In the absence of being able to interview decision makers and field managers, it is not possible to explain this, but it suggests an impaired organizational learning environment at some level.

Gender is another area in which there is on-going reporting, but in which there is little evidence that actual gender relations are understood or impacted by WFP programs, or that programming is actively informed by analysis. Objectives and reporting are all around numbers: the number of women targeted, the number of female headed households participating, the number of women on Relief Committees, etc. And some of the numbers simply don’t make sense in light of other evidence. For example, from the 2001 SPR: “80% of food aid recipients are women,” and “85% of food aid is consumed in recipient’s households” (it isn’t clear what this means, especially in light of what was known about redistribution of food aid). Or, (2005 SPR): “18% of leadership positions on Relief Committees filled by women.” While all results hierarchies need to have output indicators built in, these outputs seems to be as far as the monitoring and evaluation goes. But this is then presented as evidence of WFP’s enhanced commitment to women—evidence that doesn’t seem to be challenged in internal documentation (even the special evaluations).

On the question of institutional memory, it proved difficult to track down even some of the core documentation promised to the review team. While this is not a complaint, it was instructive to note that it proved difficult to find many of these documents, and several were never found. Documentation promised by WFP and actual deliveries of those documents is depicted in Table 6 below. Complete documentation was really only available for one year.

Table 6. Documentation received from WFP

Year	CFSAM	ANA	EMOP	SPR	Delivery Data	Notes
1998	XX		X	X	X	CFSAM and delivery data took a long time to find
1999	XX		X	X	X	CFSAM and delivery data took a long time to find
2000	X	*	X	X	X	* ANA dated 2000 is actually for 2001
2001	X	X		X	X	No EMOP
2002	X		X	X	X	No ANA
2003	X	X	X	X	X	Complete
2004	X		X	X	X	No ANA
2005	*	X	X	X	X	*CFSAM only for Northern Sudan
2006	X	X	X	*	X	* SPRs not yet complete for 2006

Formal lessons learned sections started turning up in SPRs as of 2002. But these mainly confirm internal decisions, for example confirming that assessment and monitoring improve targeting (but without any evidence that targeting actually improved—and this was around the time when a lot of the external criticism about trying to target vulnerable groups through conventional methods had accrued); or that pre-positioning had permitted greater proportions of needs to be met during the rainy season (yet, while no one doubts the importance of pre-positioning, the evidence is that a smaller proportion of needs were met during the rainy season in 2002 than in earlier years). The same lessons turn up in 2003. In 2004, a lesson learned was that dealing with high levels of malnutrition requires holistic programming—a “lesson” that the rest of the nutritional community had learned decades earlier.

Despite a decade’s influence of Do No Harm analysis, there is only partial evidence of pro-active learning about unintended or harmful impacts of food aid. For example, local purchase of food aid has been going on in Sudan (probably not in the South, or at least not on a very large scale, although it isn’t clear). Occasionally SPRs note that this is presumed to have boosted the local economy in areas where purchases were made. But there is no evidence of this, no evidence of any evaluation as to who might have benefited, and no questioning about whether some groups might have been harmed by local purchases—all of which are real issues. Despite a lot of discussion in the external literature, there is little discussion anywhere in the internal reporting about the extent to which food aid might fuel or exacerbate conflict.

Doubtless, there is real learning at the staff level, but given high turnover, relentless operational demands and other constraints, it seems apparent that real organizational learning needs higher prioritization from the leadership. However, again, in the absence of being able to interview staff about their learning, and comparing this with reported “lessons learned,” it is very difficult to develop firm conclusions or make firm recommendations.

Some important issues do get investigated. There were two additional evaluations in 2004, which raised some of these issues, though the Country Office was apparently not able to act on many of the recommendations (and again in the absence of being able to interview key decision makers, it is hard to say why). For example the report had specific suggestions about changes in the EMOP objectives, yet these remained more or less the same in 2005. On the other hand, the special report raised the issue of delayed arrivals, making for significant overruns in delivery in October through December (i.e. harvest time). This observation seems to have been taken on board and acted on by the Country Office—there was significant

improvement in avoiding delivery over-runs in 2004 and 2005 (though it isn't clear why this issue wasn't addressed much earlier).

Many of the really important issues do not seem to get raised for discussion at the level of operational reporting. Many of the issues raised by the external (non-WFP) literature reviewed here are only briefly touched on in official reporting—making it difficult to come to firm conclusions on the basis of documentary review alone. Again, these issues are doubtlessly discussed among staff—and perhaps even reported on verbally.

There are some serious constraints to organizational learning. For example, the assessment, planning and reporting time periods are not the same nor do they follow the same annual calendar. Sometimes plans have to be submitted before assessment reports are completed. The consistency of data varies substantially over time. And of course, there is little existing documentation about the issue of organizational learning itself — all of this is just our observation based on the review. There isn't much actual reflection (internal or external) to review with regard to this question.

Summary of Other Issues Emerging

A number of other issues emerged from the review. These are consolidated below into three general categories of impact: on markets, on gender and intra-household relations, and on conflict, displacement and civilian protection.

The impact of food aid on markets

Despite a lot of general knowledge about the unintended effects of food aid on trade and markets, there is very little about this in the external literature on Southern Sudan, and very little evidence in the internal WFP documentation that it is being actively monitored. For the purposes of this review, the main interest is on agricultural commodity markets but the question of dependency and labor markets does arise in a small way.

Generally speaking, there are several ways in which large scale food interventions can affect markets—both positively and negatively, and involving both the purchase and sales of food (Barrett and Maxwell 2005). In the Southern Sudan context, these impacts would be expected to work something like this: Untimely deliveries of food aid—particularly over-delivery of food aid at harvest time—would be expected to undermine local markets and drive the price of farmer's outputs down, thus having an unintended negative impact on farmers incomes and ability to sell grain. Local purchase of food from markets within Sudan would be expected to drive prices up, as it represents additional demand (however big or small). This could have different effects—it could improve farmer income, or it could drive prices up and make net-buying households more vulnerable, or whatever profit accrued from the additional sales could be captured entirely by middlemen. All of these dynamics have been noted elsewhere.

Oddly, in Southern Sudan, despite the record of over-delivery of food aid during the harvest months, there is little evidence on the impact of this, either by WFP's own internal monitoring, or from the external literature. The 2004 Special Report highlighted the problem, but didn't particularly look into the evidence of the impact of over-deliveries late in the year; rather it mainly tried to put a stop to such a practice. Likewise, occasionally the SPRs refer to local purchase (little if any of which historically came from the South, largely because of transportation and logistics difficulties) but simply posit that local purchase was good for the agricultural economy of Sudan, with little analysis of the impact of this or who was capturing the additional income.

Sharp (2006) notes that prolonged delivery of food aid is likely to have a negative impact on the interrelationships between different wealth groups in Southern Sudan. The mutually beneficial relationship between the poor and the better-off – in which the former is able to access food through laboring for the latter – can also result in a ripple effect that hastens the recovery of local markets. As the return to political stability creates increased demand and thus, greater incentive to produce, better-off groups can then strengthen food security by expanding the production of staple grains. In doing so, the poor are also able to benefit from increased employment. Continued food aid, however, could inhibit this positive dynamic. The natural dynamics of local economies are thus at risk of being disrupted if food aid continues to undermine labor relationships between wealth groups. The fear of creating dependency—in effect, undermining people's incentives to work and thus undermining the labor market—has been used by aid agencies to justify reducing relief aid in Southern Sudan. But the general consensus in the literature is that people in Southern Sudan are not dependent on food aid in any prolonged or permanent way. According to Duffield et

al. (2000: 46), “relief deliveries have in general been too unreliable and inadequate for dependency, except for limited periods of acute emergency.” The 1996 review of OLS criticized agencies for reducing rations on the grounds that it would force communities to re-establish production and income-earning activities. It further argued that instead of empowering communities, this strategy had the effect of making people even more vulnerable as they had reduced access to food, increased exposure to violence, and were often forced into exploitative working conditions. In Ed Da’ain, those who were displaced into camps were employed on an inequitable basis as cheap and tied agricultural laborers who became increasingly indebted to local landowners. The Provincial Commissioner estimated that the displaced accounted for 85 percent of the agricultural labor force in Ed Da’ain although they accounted for less than 20 percent of the population (Macrae et al. 1997). In Wau, some displaced people resorted to cutting timber and prostitution. Therefore, the attempt to reduce dependency could result in perpetuating other more negative forms of dependence or coping (Harvey and Lind 2005).

From the WFP perspective, food aid is provided during the hunger gap to supplement shortfalls. Therefore WFP strategy is to help people remain self sufficient and avoid any disincentive effects like dependency. But there is limited evidence on the extent to which this actually happens, due to limitations in monitoring systems. This is an area in which both better monitoring and information is required and more pro-active analysis to be on the lookout for problems before they arise.

The impact of food aid on gender and intra-household relations

The promotion of gender equity has been a consistent and prominent feature of WFP operations in Southern Sudan. WFP’s program of Enhanced Commitment to Women (ECW) is aimed at empowering women. According to WFP internal reporting, some 87% of recipients of WFP food aid are women (WFP SPR 2005). More women are now involved in food aid management at all levels, and are issued with ration cards to increase their control over resources. WFP also undertakes training on management and skills development for women (WFP EMOP 2002). The micro-project initiatives introduced in 2002 were mainly intended to benefit women. By 2000, it was hoped that 65% of the beneficiaries would be women (WFP EMOP 2000). In order to empower girls, WFP seeks to increase girl enrolment in schools using the school feeding program. It also aims at reducing gender disparities in education through improvement of facilities in girls’ schools.

But results are mixed, and often other, complementary inputs do not have the same objectives. For example, although it is estimated that women account for 80 percent of food production and are most often responsible for tending crops and selecting and storing seeds for the future, they are systematically marginalized from initiatives aimed at strengthening food security (Ojaba et al. 2002). The OLS seeds and farm tools protocols, for instance, targeted distribution at heads of households which were usually men, as did skills training programs organized by individual aid agencies. Furthermore, excessive workloads often prevent women from participating in community activities or accessing information on available assistance.

In 1994-5 when WFP and SRRA formed relief committees to target and distribute food aid, a particular emphasis was placed on women for three reasons: first, to make use of their customary role in managing and storing grain; second, to avoid bias and abuse of power by chiefs; and third, to enhance the empowerment of women in their communities. Implicit in this strategy was the assumption that including women in decision making and food aid distribution would increase the likelihood of food reaching those who were most in need (Taylor et al. 2004). In Southern Sudan, each village would gather on the day of food distribution and elect a representative called the tieng wai (woman with a stick) who would target

beneficiaries. The elected woman would then select the specified number of women to be targeted from each village. However, most observers agree that the system of relief committees not only failed to reach the most vulnerable, it also backfired by making women even more socially vulnerable (Deng 1999). The tieng wai was usually unaware of the circumstances of the entire village and was thus unable to base selection on objective criteria of need. The system also exposed the tieng wai to all the responsibility or blame for exclusion or inclusion errors, and inadvertently placed her in a particularly precarious position. Therefore, while the structure of relief committees appeared to be democratic and gender-balanced, it failed to achieve its goals of targeting the needy and promoting women's empowerment because it imposed external perceptions of gender equity and vulnerability.

Many agencies including WFP continue to focus on female-headed households as a particularly vulnerable group to be targeted for food distribution. The OLS Review, however, criticized aid agencies for their narrow definition of beneficiaries, arguing that the special focus on female-headed households stemmed from a lack of understanding of the concept (Karim et al. 1996). Problems in definition resulted in significant discrepancies in the number of female-headed households identified in Bahr el Gazal: in 1993, WFP found that 30 percent of households were female headed, while UNICEF's seeds and tools survey a year later assessed that only 13.6 percent were female headed (Rhodes 2002). The difficulty of assessing the true number of female-headed households is compounded by the movement of widows into the households of their kin or from one kin group to another, as well as confusion surrounding the status of second/third/fourth, etc. wives (Ntata 1999).

Ensuring the participation of women in food aid interventions requires more than their physical involvement: it calls for a meaningful and consultative collaboration based on careful analysis of their capacity and social context. And even when more meaningful participation is achieved, it is unclear how this impacts on gender relations in the longer term. Clearly this is another issue that requires greater in-depth understanding.

The impact of food aid on conflict, displacement and protection

In more recent years, one of the objectives of the EMOP was to promote the peace process, and throughout the war period, one of the objectives of the EMOP was to prevent stress migration. External observers have noted that the manipulation of food and other relief assistance in fact sometimes played into the conflict, and often through the mechanism of encouraging civilian populations to move. There is some limited evidence on this question.

In addition to the provision of food and non-food relief items, the presence of OLS contributed to a general improvement of the sense of safety and well-being among the people of Southern Sudan. The presence of international aid workers facilitated the close monitoring of military activities and human needs, which allowed for rapid response to sudden changes in the humanitarian situation. OLS also created "corridors of tranquility" for the delivery of relief supplies, which had the wider impact of reducing military activities in those areas and enabling the recommencement of commerce and other economic activities. As a result, people in the surrounding countryside were able to take advantage of the improved security situation to plant and grow their own food (Ojaba et al. 2002).

There is significant evidence that food aid has both positive and negative impacts on migration and displacement. However, it should be noted that the literature on this subject is primarily related to events

including and prior to the 1998 Bahr el Ghazal famine and may not be entirely relevant to the current post-CPA context.

The timely delivery of food aid can prevent people from succumbing to stress migration in search of food. Field assessments in Bahr el Ghazal, for example, revealed that international relief had allowed people to stay in their home area instead of migrating to the north, or as they described it, surrender (Duffield et al. 2000). This is in contrast to the 1987-8 famine in Bahr el Ghazal, when lack of aid resulted in large-scale migration to bordering areas.

Food aid can act as a magnet to intentionally or inadvertently displace populations. The Government of Sudan has been accused of using relief to depopulate certain parts of the south, particularly areas that are rich in oil. Populations may also voluntarily move away from their home areas to locations where they can potentially receive food. During the 1998 famine in Bahr el Ghazal, for instance, when the Government of Sudan restricted relief flight access to Ajiep and three nearby airstrips, large numbers of people congregated in those areas in hope of food aid (Duffield et al. 2000). Similarly, ICRC reported that 47,000 people arrived in Wau in May 1998 in response to the availability of relief food – this amounted to a daily influx of 1,000-2,000 people (ICRC News Releases as found in Rhodes 2002). The concentration of people around food distribution sites has serious implications for increased spread of disease and mortality, particularly in the absence of adequate shelter and water and sanitation services.

The diversion of food aid – either through stealing by militias or payment of the SPLA tax tayeen – has been widely reported (Keen 1999; Duffield et al. 2000). Although it is impossible to measure the extent of this practice, senior OLS and SRRA officials believed that the value of relief food to the people of Bahr el-Ghazal was far greater than the cost of its abuse (Duffield et al. 2000). It could also be the case that the SPLA was perceived as part of the community or indeed a defender of the community, and thus entitled to a share of the relief assistance. The SPLM/SRRA/OLS Task Force noted in 1998 that the proportion of food aid provided as tax depended on the community's need for protection (Jaspars 2000).

Other impacts of food aid on conflict are clearly detrimental, such as when relief centers and the people awaiting distribution have been targeted by raiders in northern Bahr el Ghazal. The Government has also been able to use selective flight permissions and relief provisions to foster divisions in SPLA-held areas. In addition, targeting food aid to one area or group over another can create internal tensions or resentment. The Nuer from Ayod, for example, were recruited into raids on the Dinka around Kongor and Bor in part because of their perceived neglect in relief operations (Keen 1999).

Conversely, aid can have the positive effect of reducing conflict within communities. With the injection of relief, people are less likely to resort to criminal or violent misappropriation of food. Some people may benefit indirectly even when aid is stolen, as the market is flooded and the price of food drops. Thus, effective relief has the potential to diminish conflict and in doing so, disrupt the activities of those who benefit from conflict (Keen 1999).

Summary of Recommendations

Throughout this report, we have repeatedly stressed that a desk review alone is unlikely to constitute sufficient evidence for a full understanding of the dynamic situation in Southern Sudan, and therefore it is also unlikely to constitute an adequate basis for comprehensive recommendations. Some recommendations do emerge clearly from the foregoing discussion, but many questions are raised for which there is not sufficient evidence to suggest answers.

These recommendations fall into several categories. First, there are recommendations for the more immediate, life-saving interventions in acute emergency response. Given the situation in Southern Sudan, these operations will likely continue for some time, and there is a fair amount of evidence on which to base these. Some of these are recommendations for immediate action; some are recommendations for building a better evidence base through improved organizational learning, through consultation with stakeholders, and through further research.

Second, there are some recommendations for longer-term, transitional programmatic interventions. Given the history of Southern Sudan, there is less existing, in-country evidence on which to base these, but there was a lot of other experience represented, for example, at the Food Aid Forum in Khartoum in June. Again, some of these constitute recommendations for immediate implementation, but many of these also call for experiential learning through direct programming and action research, and in a few cases, for more basic research.

Within these two broad areas and two different kinds of recommendations found in each, there are several other ways of looking at these recommendations. When this review began, we presumed we were concerned primarily with technical problems—and indeed many of the areas here can be defined in technical terms (information systems and analytical constraints; targeting and distribution mechanisms, etc.). However, some issues arising have as much to do with donor relations as with technical, programmatic knowledge (particularly the timing of food aid deliveries; adequate support for core WFP activities as well as support for other appropriate interventions). As an earlier section of this report made clear, some issues are related to organizational learning (for example, repeatedly seeing the same issues arise in WFP's own internal documentation; or in external critiques and why they seem not to be taken on board programmatically). And some of these are relational issues (partnership, which affects analysis, access, trust and believability; and also influences operational capacity, monitoring and reporting, etc.). So by no means are the issues that have arisen to be located purely in the technical realm. Nevertheless, the following list constitutes our major (and some minor) recommendations growing out of the desk review.

Recommendations for Improvement in Emergency Response

Information Systems and Analysis

1. Improve information systems and analytical capacities. Beef up food security monitoring along with nutritional surveillance, as well as incorporating some simple health indicators, so that some preliminary analysis of the actual proximate causes of under-five malnutrition can be judged, and so that there are other mechanisms for judging the food security impact of food aid.
2. Improve M&E capacity of WFP field offices to increase availability of basic data, including end-use monitoring and impact monitoring.

3. Improve internal documentation systems so that information can be more easily stored, indexed and retrieved—to enable better evaluation and learning.
4. Collaborate more effectively with other information and analytical systems, and build the capacity of SIFSIA.
5. Improve the monitoring of unintended effects of food aid, particularly in terms of markets, changes in gender relations, and the exacerbation of conflict and displacement.
6. Incorporate response analysis into the program development cycle—following on from situational analysis and needs assessment and prior to response planning.
7. In addition to tracking humanitarian indicators, incorporate more political economy analysis including better understandings of lineages, gender relations, power relations among groups, relations between the GNU and the GoSS.
8. Use these improvements to address the issues of transparency with donors—through ensuring the integrity of information provided with appeals.

Dealing with Malnutrition

9. Implement the nutritional surveillance system as quickly as possible, with carefully selected sentinel sites. This system needs to have a capacity building element and the authority to set in place standards and systems for assessment.
10. Undertake a comprehensive study analyzing the causes of the high prevalence of malnutrition in Southern Sudan. Bolster the analytical capacity of whoever takes the lead on nutritional surveillance—to understand food and nutrition dynamics better, to understand non-food inputs to nutrition, and to understand work demands, caring ability, etc. of women in Southern Sudan.
11. Ensure the appropriate levels of resources into all forms of emergency response (food and non-food). There is a need for addressing the non-food aid issues, including health, water, sanitation, and developing a better understanding of the labor demands on mothers, in order to address the high prevalence of malnutrition. This will require working in partnership with other agencies, and advocating for a more balanced allocation of resources. WFP may have to advocate for a better balance of inputs in the EMOP to address malnutrition. This might mean advocating for resources for other organizations, not just for food aid.

Timing, Targeting and Mode of Delivery

12. Advocate for the timely delivery of the food aid that is pledged for Southern Sudan so that it can be pre-positioned during the dry season in the early part of the year, to ensure that the greatest proportion of assessed need can be met during the months in the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season, when needs are the highest and logistics the most difficult. Ensure that over-delivery does not occur during harvest periods.
13. Much of the debate over appropriate targeting mechanisms, but these are around the “who?” questions. Actually it appears that the biggest source of both inclusion and exclusion targeting errors has to do with the “when?” questions (the timing of deliveries), and the “what?” questions (food is what is provided). Resolve these two issues, and the “who?” and “how?” questions are greatly simplified—though they still need attention and further action research.

14. These questions could be addressed by a few changes in distribution and targeting modalities. Provide beneficiaries with clear information on timing and organization of distributions. Build a better understanding of kinship structures and their potentials and limitations to assist in targeting. Develop clear guidelines for when blanket approaches to distribution apply, and when distribution must be targeted.

Organizational Learning

15. Review capacity for organizational learning—will improving information gathering and analytical capacity be sufficient, or is there an issue about the organization being able to absorb lessons, even if they are “learned” by some unit within the organization (links between information systems and the program unit for example)

Support for returnees

16. On the issue of support to returnees, need better real-time information and flexible approach to respond to fluctuating situations of return and need; and a sound longer-term strategy to rebuild livelihoods.

Recommendations for Improvement in Transitional Programming

Move from supplying food aid to supporting food security.

1. This set of recommendations is not as “evidence-based” as others, because there is not as much to draw on here. There is significant need for further research. This doesn’t mean stopping emergency response or safety net-like activities. Rather it means taking a more analytical approach, and advocating strongly with donors to implement the kinds of interventions that analysis suggests—even if it is in a different agency’s core competencies, not WFP’s.
2. Address longer-term livelihood issues more holistically. This can be accomplished both through the immediate EMOP and in a multi-year PRRO. This means partnering with other organizations that address livelihoods more broadly (agricultural recovery including innovative approaches to seed programming (Remington et al. 2002); support to pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods (Catley et al. 2005); micro-finance and other income-enhancing activities) in addition to WFP’s work on food for assets or food for recovery.
3. Look for ways that food aid can be a positive contributor to the market. WFP should work towards increasing production in Southern Sudan areas and linking areas of surplus with areas of deficit. This could be done through local purchase and strengthening farmer cooperatives through contracting for specified quantities. Significant experience exists elsewhere in promoting this approach with farmer groups in relatively less favored areas.
4. WFP should also build on its non-food aid interventions, such as roads and infrastructure to improve access to markets, food for assets, and local purchase of food (Food Aid Forum 2006).

Recommendations for Further Research

1. There is an urgent need for a good study to determine the most important constraints to reducing childhood malnutrition in Southern Sudan, and correspondingly, to determine the most important food and non-food inputs to reducing the prevalence of global acute malnutrition in Southern Sudan.

2. Action research is urgently needed to determine the key information constraints to improving programmatic decision making and implementation.
3. Action research to understand the ability of traditional (kinship) support networks to care for the vulnerable.
4. In areas where localized conflict continues (or is even exacerbated by the return of displaced people and refugees) research is needed to understand the ways in which conflict early warning and humanitarian protection needs to be incorporated into on-going humanitarian assistance programs.
5. Under both emergency and transitional circumstances applied research is needed to understand better when it makes sense to promote the use of cash and when it makes sense to rely on in-kind transfers to disaster-affected communities. Recent work on food aid suggests that under circumstances where markets function well and where there is the potential of local surplus production, cash is a preferred mechanism for transferring income to disaster affected households, and even where the market may not be sufficiently well developed to respond to increased demand, areas of local surplus production would be well served by the local purchase of in-kind (especially food) inputs (Barrett and Maxwell 2005). This model has yet to be fully field-tested and developed into a practical tool for humanitarian agencies, and the transition towards market economies in areas of Southern Sudan, which is likely to be variable and context specific, make it an ideal context to test the model.
6. Under circumstances of chronic vulnerability, do investments in livelihoods diversification and disaster risk reduction (micro-credit and micro-enterprise development, roads and infrastructure, seeds and agricultural rehabilitation, etc. as well as specific efforts in localized early warning and community based disaster preparedness) have differential impact on livelihood recovery and particularly reducing vulnerability? This question could be well investigated in Southern Sudan through developing partnerships with local communities, local administrations, and implementing agencies, monitoring the inputs and impacts of different kinds of programs, and particularly monitoring what happens to livelihoods and humanitarian conditions if and when subsequent shocks affect the community. Such a question is of major importance to both implementing agencies and donors.
7. A more comprehensive study of livelihood change in a transitional context is important because most of what we know about livelihoods, we have learned from single cross-sectional studies. While there have been some longitudinal studies of livelihoods in situations of chronic poverty, there have rarely been longitudinal studies of livelihoods in conflict or crisis situations. How and why some livelihood groups are able to thrive and improve asset holdings and others are not under these circumstances are at best poorly understood; likewise there is little longitudinal evidence about the impact of interventions.

Annexes

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2. Time Table—Significant Political Events in Southern Sudan

From: FEWSNET Reports		
Year	Month(s)	Description of event
1998	April – November	Intensified fighting in Southern Sudan leads to fresh displacement of populations and the aggravation of an already precarious food situation following the 1997 drought. This results in famine, with more than 70,000 deaths in Bahr El Ghazal. Fighting during the rainy season means that production in the next year would be poor.
1999	November	Increased fighting in Western Upper Nile as oil starts to flow.
2000	February	WFP distributed more food aid than planned in November and December 1999. The expulsion of NGOs from the SPLA controlled areas after they failed to sign the SRRA MOU led to a decline in capacity to distribute food aid.
2000	July/August	Due to intensified insecurity and haphazard attacks on aid workers, an increase in number of areas to which the GoS denied access and increased and unresolved looting of food aid led to a break in the WFP pipeline to Southern Sudan therefore reducing the total amount of food aid distributed.
2000	October/November	Good harvest period. WFP significantly overruns planned deliveries during harvest.
2001	February	Increased insecurity along rail lines in Bahr el Ghazal. Fears arise of repeating the 1998 scenario. Seasonal food insecurity increases in Eastern Equatoria.
2001	May/June	Food availability and access in the surplus-producing counties of Western Equatoria Region and parts of the Lakes Region remain good. In contrast, food is largely unavailable in most other parts, with cereal prices on an upward trend.
2001	August-December	2001 harvest is good, following good rains. WFP again significantly overruns planned deliveries during harvest.
2002	January-June	Insecurity in much of South—escalating conflict as peace talks proceed—leads to increased food insecurity.
2002	July	Machakos Protocols signed (on ceasefire and negotiation).
2002	September	Increased insecurity in Western Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal. Rainfall is erratic and inadequate. Stockpiles and pre-positioning are adequate but overall this leads to worsening of food security situation.
2002	November	Memorandum of Understanding for the Cessation of Hostilities (cease fire modalities).
2002	December	Reduced harvest—food needs will go up.
2003	May	Delays in food shipments slow the speed of delivery and project implementation as hunger season sets in. Food insecurity to increase because of this.
2003	July	Good rains in some areas, hunger season nears peak. Distributions down because of transport problems.
2003-2004	December – March	Sorghum harvest believed to be better than normal. Expectations of a CPA raise concerns about impending IDP returns and its impact on food security status in South.
2004	January – April	Conflict worsens dramatically in Darfur, signaling need to scale up response in Darfur, even as prospects for peace look good in Southern Sudan.
2004	February/March	FEWSNET issues report of early declines in household food stocks. Pasture conditions better than usual. Report re-issued in March.
2004	May	Protocol on the “Three Areas” (Abyei, Southern Blue Nile Region and Nuba Mountains/Southern Kordofan).
2004	June- August	Pipeline problems reported as food needs peak. August FEWSNET

		report projects extended hunger season.
2004-2005	December-March	Below normal level floods meant less fish and other wild foods—household stocks depleted more rapidly than usual.
2005	January	Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Naivasha, Kenya. Rapid and widespread return of IDPs from the North and refugees from Kenya and Uganda. Complex range of re-integration and resettlement challenges for both the returnees and their hosts.
2005	July	John Garang killed in helicopter accident in Southern Sudan on July 30. Food insecurity conditions persist.
2006	January	Good harvest reported. Chronic vulnerability remains in Western Flood Plains.
2006	March-June	Increased return of IDPs leads to deteriorating food security in Bahr el Ghazal. But better rains and improved harvest expected.

Stylized annual calendar for Southern Sudan*		
Month	Agricultural Cycle	Humanitarian Cycle
Jan	Dry season—floods recede	ANA: Food security forecast
Feb	Dry season—floods recede	Population movement
Mar	Dry season—wild foods	EMOP starts; Population movement
Apr	First rains—planting	Population movement
May	First rains—planting	Population movement
Jun	Onset of heavy rains	Population movement
Jul	Rainy season—hunger gap	
Aug	Rainy season—hunger gap; flooding	
Sep	Rainy season—flooding	
Oct	Harvest in unimodal areas	
Nov	Harvest of long season crops	CFSAM and ANA field work
Dec	Harvest of long season crops	CFSAM and ANA field work

* Based on FEWSNET information

3. Methodology of the Review

Approach to collection of information. This report is based solely on a review of existing documentation, casting as broad a net as possible for relevant material to review. The full list of documents reviewed is included in Annex 1 above. As many internal documents as possible were obtained from the World Food Programme. Most of the documentations we sought were available for review. External documentation was sought through the usual methods of library, data base and internet searching, and extensive follow up to track down relevant “gray” literature. This process had to rely on our own networks, so while the list of documents reviewed is extensive, it is probably not exhaustive.

The review itself followed two processes. One was to review the internal WFP documentation. Here we were first trying to document the annual shifts in program, the annual analyses and assessments and the resulting program plans and evaluations, the lessons learned that emerged from this, and how—or whether—these lessons were subsequently incorporated into ongoing planning and programming. The second process was to review the external literature and note the extent to which the two different sets of documentation influenced each other; where there were agreements or disagreements in the analysis—and therefore in recommended programmatic practice. Part of the second process was to also review external early warning and context monitoring, particularly FEWSNET reports, to compare these with the internal WFP assessments and plans.

Emergent issues and analytical framework. Several issues were specified in the Terms of Reference (noted in the Introduction) and several more quickly emerged from the review. Once these issues were identified, our analytical strategy was to note divergence and convergence in the internal and external literature, and to make a judgment about the strength of the evidence base. Where the evidence base for conclusions is strong, and there is a reasonable consensus between internal and external documentation, clear recommendations can be made. Where there is a strong disagreement—as is evident with regard to several issues; or where the evidence base for conclusions is weaker, clear recommendations are less feasible, and in some cases further research is clearly needed before good recommendations are possible—sometimes basic, quantitative research but often action research in the field, engaging partners and communities. The emergent issues in this analytical framework are in Table 1 in the Executive Summary.

Data for the nutritional analysis presented here was provided by the Livelihoods Analysis Forum, which tabulated the results of 206 individual nutritional assessments between 1998 and 2006. WFP provided a similar, but less extensive dataset—and the WFP data also included Northern Sudan. This data was aggregated by month across the various years; and also sorted by livelihood zones, to derive the “trend” lines depicted in Section III. To the best of our knowledge, this is the most extensive data set currently available on Southern Sudan.

Data for the analysis of timing and targeting of food distribution came from WFP Sudan. We are grateful to Rukia Yacoub for her help in assembling all this data, which had to be assembled piece-meal from operational records.