

(iii) Methodology

During its weeks in the region from the 12 February to 25 March 1996, Mission members used a variety of methods to gather as much information as possible in the short time available.

Between one and two weeks were spent in each country. Data used was on the whole secondary, drawn from reports made available by UN, NGO and government sources. One of the recurring themes of the evaluation is the lack of consistent and reliable data, a failing that has been a major constraint for all aspects of this operation.

Meetings were held in each country with representatives of all categories involved, some of which were held jointly by the Mission, while others were carried out by individual members in accordance with their own terms of reference. The Mission met with some hundreds of people, including local and international relief workers from NGOs and UN agencies, government representatives, and the beneficiaries themselves. Particular effort was made to listen

to the perspective of the beneficiaries, especially given the general impression of the Mission that their voices have been missing from much analysis of their problems.

The Mission successfully and without incident crossed faction lines in Liberia by road with unarmed factional escorts. One field visit was made by helicopter in Liberia, and one by light plane in Sierra Leone. These visits were the only opportunity the Mission had to talk to people outside the capital cities in the war-affected countries. Thus, our information on the situation up-country has been based to large extent on second-hand reports. We were able to visit IDP and refugee camps in both Freetown and Monrovia, and therefore interview these beneficiaries more extensively. Throughout Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire the Mission travelled entirely

by road, and was thus able to observe more closely the situation faced by refugees in these countries, and to speak to those actually working in the field with them. We are indebted to members of the country offices for travelling with the Mission, and providing a valuable perspective on the operation.

The Mission was provided with background information by each country office, which formed one of the few reference sources for our work. That provided by the country office in Conakry was outstanding in addressing the Mission's specific issues. Unfortunately but symptomatically

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no reply was received by the Office of Evaluation to its December 1995 request to Country Directors to contribute their own evaluatory analyses.

Finally, Mission debriefings contributed to mutual understanding enormously. In one form or another, these were held in each country, with one in Abidjan attended by three of the Country Directors (of whom one is also the WFP Regional Emergency Coordinator and DHA's Regional Focal Point and Emergency Coordinator for Liberia and Sierra Leone). Team meetings were held to prepare for these, as also end-of-mission briefing in Rome (28 March 1996) for which principal findings and recommendations were formulated in outline and presented orally. Outside sources including the Rwanda Evaluation Report and general literature on conflict and relief have been consulted where relevant to issues pertaining to the

evaluation.

The full reports by individual members are available as an annex from the Office of Evaluation.

Much use has been made of these in the writings of this text. The writing of the main report has been structured and carried out by the team leader (as external evaluator) and social anthropologist, working in close relationship with the team coordinator (internal evaluator), and nutritionist.