



Executive Summary

(i) WFP's involvement in China started in 1979 and, to date, some 4 million tons of food worth a total cost of about US\$1 billion have been delivered through 67 projects and one Country Programme. The Government of China contributed US\$1.16 billion as counterpart funds while IFAD, starting in 1996, has been associated and consented loans for a total amount of US\$148 million through 6 joint projects. Over the period, it has been estimated that close to 30 million people have benefited from WFP assistance.

(ii) Food aid has played a critical catalytic role – with financial and technical inputs - in enhancing the development process of poor households. Socio-economic indicators indicate a dramatic improvement in the living conditions of the beneficiaries. Results are exceptional with regard to physical achievements, mobilization of beneficiaries, efficiency in food management and sustained support from the Government. Coordinated Government action is a major ingredient to a successful integrated approach to poverty alleviation. The Project Management Office structure has clearly demonstrated a successful integration of different Government ministries for the implementation of multi-sectoral development projects and could be a model for other countries.

(iii) Cooperation between different UN agencies, and especially between the three Rome-based agencies, resulted in successful programmes. The joint preparation and implementation of IFAD and WFP-assisted projects has created a synergy in combining the complementary capacities of the two organisations especially in the field of education, training, health and income generating activities. Significant technical assistance provided by FAO, mobilized directly by WFP or through a UNDP “Umbrella Project”, has contributed to the sustainability of the WFP-assisted projects in China. However, the relative decrease of in-depth project formulation, systematic organization of technical reviews and evaluation missions during the last decade has indeed hampered project implementation, necessary adjustments and corporate learning.

(iv) Adjustments have been made to address specifically women in development. Today, women represent about 57 percent of the participants for Food-for-Training and 50 percent for Food-for-Work activities. CP activities have helped to shorten the food gap and to some extent alleviate women's traditional workload (water, straw or wood fetching and grain processing) and create new opportunities for income generation activities for women, although this has in some cases increased the women's workload.

(v) The current Country Programme (CP) has showed a gradual and substantial increase of the Chinese Government's cost share including the costs of ocean freight and all landside transport. The combination of investments in productive infrastructure, training, social infrastructure and micro-credit brought commendable results. However, limited WFP resources - due in particular to food shortfalls experienced in 2003 and 2004 - were distributed in a too large number of villages. When limited resources are spread out, households do not benefit from the synergy between project activities. The overall impact has consequently been diluted. Furthermore, the programme approach has resulted in weaker technical appraisal and monitoring of basic activities.

(vi) The results achieved by the CP constitute a clear illustration of the positive findings of the recent evaluation of the WFP “Enabling Development” policy (EDP) especially regarding (a) the benefits derived from increased agricultural production, basic social facilities and income-generating activities; (b) the selection of activities targeted on the poorest populations who have marginal assets and live in remote and under-serviced areas; (c) the existence of solid partnership especially with the Government; (d) progress made with respect to enhanced inclusion of women in the benefits of WFP development activities. On the other hand, the limited performance of WFP in demonstrating results



and in monitoring and analysing efficiency-related issues as well as the resource-limitation-related problems pointed out by the EDP evaluation are also quite present in the China CP.

(vii) The phasing out of WFP assistance has prompted early WFP Programme Officers' departures and systematic monitoring has become sporadic, reducing WFP's ability to follow the implementation and impact of activities. At the phasing out stage, it is recommended that particular attention be paid to a proper level of resources – both in commodities and in staffing – to ensure sustainability and to capitalize on the experience gained.