

FAO'S EU FOOD FACILITY PROJECTS END BUT THEIR IMPACT CONTINUES



WORKING FOR those pushed into poverty by the food price crisis of 2007-2008

WORKING TO transition from emergency aid to longer-term development

WORKING WITH IFAD and WFP

WORKING THANKS TO EU



Bangladesh had been experiencing significant economic progress since the 1990s, but when the high food price crisis hit in 2007, it pushed 7.5 million more Bangladeshis into poverty. This was a scene repeated in developing countries around the world, where drastically increasing commodity prices in 2007-2008 led more and more of the world's most vulnerable into crisis situations.

The crisis was so fast moving and caused such widespread devastation that no development organization could tackle the problem on its own. The European Union (EU) stepped in quickly. It established the EU Food Facility, allotting €1 billion to help countries deal with the immediate challenges caused by high food prices. The initiative ran for three years. When it ended in 2012, the emergency aid had helped tens of millions of the world's most vulnerable people to survive the crisis. At the same time, FAO had designed projects that provided training and the materials needed to make them more resilient to future crises.

A high food price crisis and concurrent global economic downturn combined to push millions of the world's poor people further into poverty in 2007-2008, with a parallel effect on global food security. The European Union (EU) moved rapidly to create the EU Food Facility, allocating an historic €1 billion to support those most in need. The EU channelled the funds through international organizations, NGOs and agencies of member countries, which then designed and initiated targeted short-term projects to bridge the gap between countries' emergency needs and their development goals. FAO, which received a fourth of the funding, used assessments to target assistance to some 15 million people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. When the project cycles ended in early 2012, FAO was able to provide tangible evidence that investing in agriculture and nutrition had had an immediate impact on the countries' acute problems, while at the same time contributing to improved resilience of vulnerable populations. This finding has long-term implications for reducing poverty and increasing global food security.

ASSESSMENTS ENABLE IMPROVED TARGETING OF PROJECTS

FAO, the largest single recipient of Food Facility funding, turned its €238 million (US\$320 million)

EU Food Facility emergency aid helped tens of millions of the world's most vulnerable survive the crisis.



FAO implemented 31 projects in 28 countries that provided direct benefit to 15 million people.

allocation into 31 projects in 28 countries. These provided direct benefit to 15 million farmers, fishers and livestock keepers in Africa, Asia and Latin America. As the initiative began, FAO coordinated with its UN partners, especially its sister agencies WFP and IFAD, to undertake assessment missions to determine each country's specific needs and constraints. With the feedback, FAO was able to target its projects and provide support and training in areas ranging from improving agricultural production or water-harvesting methods, to introducing new crop varieties, creating private sector seed enterprises and establishing farmer-market links.

In addition to the training, the projects also provided critical inputs such as seeds and fertilizer, agricultural machinery and irrigation equipment, along with small and large ruminants, poultry and animal feed, and fishing equipment. For example, FAO projects oversaw the vaccination of more than 44.6 million livestock. Thanks to recognizing the importance of combining the provision of inputs with specific training in how best to use or apply them, FAO has helped position recipients to continue improving their own lives, thus bridging the gap between emergency aid and medium to long-term development.

In Bangladesh, working with the government, FAO identified both present and future needs and designed a project that supported 80 000 farming and fishing households in the country's southwest region. This area was especially hard-hit because it was still recovering from flood damage incurred by two consecutive cyclones – Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009. The project provided farmers with inputs and machinery, livestock and feed, plus material to build animal sheds. It also supplied fishers with fish seeds and equipment to facilitate aquaculture and open-water fishing – all of which were introduced through farmer field schools that FAO established. Recognizing the success of this project in improving production and helping farmers build resilience for the future, the government is now discussing continuing the project and scaling up the strategy.

Similarly, in the Philippines, FAO established farmer field schools to introduce small-scale irrigation systems. Meanwhile the FAO Food Facility project in Zimbabwe provided 26 000 tonnes of maize and sorghum seeds plus appropriate fertilizer, which greatly increased yields for 176 000 farm households. In Niger, where the food crisis was heightened by a

drought that ravaged harvests, the priority was to reduce malnutrition of 72 000 farm families, or some 500 000 people, by increasing their agricultural production.

FAO was not only able to mount these projects rapidly and with very targeted recipients, it also was able to adapt to the unexpected. The original project plan in Pakistan called for supporting 100 000 farmers with wheat and vegetable seeds and fertilizer. But when Pakistan was hit with severe monsoon floods, FAO expanded the project to assist those in flooded areas, while still providing the promised assistance to the farmers.

FAO established field teams to oversee the operations of its 31 projects, which had a 99 percent delivery rate. Even though the projects have ended, their contributions have not. Almost all of the countries involved have committed to build on what the EU Food Facility projects started.