



**World Food
Programme**

**Programme
Alimentaire
Mondial**

**Programa
Mundial de
Alimentos**

**برنامج الأغذية
العالمي**



The
Executive
Director

*Fighting Hunger
Worldwide*

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3 February 2014

Mr. David Sullivan
Committee Secretary
Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Mr. Sullivan,

Thank you for your letter dated 16 December 2013 requesting a written submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on the inquiry into Australia's overseas aid and development assistance programme.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the world's largest humanitarian organization and the United Nations' frontline agency in the fight against hunger. Each year, WFP provides food assistance to more than 90 million people in 80 countries worldwide.

WFP is committed to working with governments and other partners to ensure that hungry people around the world have access to nutritious food, particularly during crises. WFP implements food and nutrition security projects, ranging from emergency food relief to resilience-building activities and safety net programmes such as school feeding. The objective of these projects is to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to food while also providing support to economic growth and long-term poverty reduction. Promoting access to food is critical for mitigating the risk of conflict and political instability.

Australia is a world leader in promoting market-based solutions to hunger, resilience building, disaster risk reduction, and the prevention of undernutrition. Australia is a strong and long-standing partner of WFP, providing a total of AU\$ 525.4 million over the past five years. Your government's flexible, multi-year funding approach is a model of Good Humanitarian Donorship, which allows maximum operational efficiency. In recognition of its leadership, Australia was elected by its peers to be the next WFP Executive Board Vice President and President in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

The devastating impact of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition on people and economies is clear and evidence-based. Hunger stunts physical and mental growth potential. Affected economies lose an estimated 6 to 16 percent of GDP in productivity each year. Children who suffer early growth failure will as adults, experience and suffer from lower earning potential and more chronic illnesses, and often fail to realize their educational promise.



In June 2013, the Executive Board approved WFP's Strategic Plan for 2014-2017. The Strategic Plan provides the framework for WFP's operations and its role in achieving a world with zero hunger. Our Strategic Plan carries forward WFP's focus on food assistance for the poorest and most vulnerable women, men, boys and girls. The Plan clearly reflects that WFP pursues our Strategic Objectives in accordance with international humanitarian law and principles. The Plan also recognizes the direct relationship between WFP's ability to effectively partner with governments, civil society and the private sector to build healthier, stronger and more resilient communities in the countries where we work.

WFP is accountable for reporting on the progress toward our Strategic Objectives and maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. This accountability is achieved through the application of a comprehensive performance management system.

WFP's commitment to optimizing our performance across all aspects of its work and transparently reporting on results is absolute. WFP will hold ourselves and our partners accountable to deliver, not just outputs, but also outcomes. We know that achieving value for money for resources entrusted to us is a must, and have worked with our Executive Board, OECD-DAC and DFID to develop a value for money framework that guides our funding allocations.

WFP and Australia maintain a solid and constructive partnership. This partnership has developed over the years and includes policy commitments at the global, regional and country levels. Australia's flexible financial support has played an important role in fostering WFP's innovation, agility and an ability to perform.

I would like to highlight the following areas where the Australian people's assistance has made and continues to make a difference:

1. Providing leadership to address global hunger

Australia plays a very important and active role in improving global food security and nutrition. This commitment is highly commendable.

WFP encourages Australia to continue this leading role. WFP acknowledges that Australia's upcoming G20 Presidency, WFP Executive Board Vice Presidency and subsequent Presidency provide your government a unique leadership opportunity in the fight against global hunger. We would particularly recommend continuing and increasing Australia's involvement in the Asia stunting reduction project. Your leadership and support in this area helped establish the evidence base for identifying what is needed to tackle undernutrition at scale, especially among children and expectant mothers.

Australia has also been particularly instrumental in advancing resilience-based approaches to food security. The multi-year and less earmarked funding approach your government has undertaken allows WFP to determine the location and timing of commodity procurement as well as to prioritize the allocation of funding, better enabling WFP to meet the most critical food needs around the world.



2. *Preparing people for crises*

Investing in preparedness is a critical component of reducing the impact of disasters. It requires a thorough understanding of the context, effectively utilizing the capacities and competencies of partners and having the plans in place to move staff and supplies quickly. Australia's financial investment has been instrumental in strengthening WFP's crisis preparedness and response capacity. This has included its contribution to supporting the pre-positioning and management of relief items, which proved instrumental in the response to Typhoon Haiyan that recently devastated the Philippines.

In the Asia-Pacific region, Australia, together with OCHA, plays a lead role in disaster risk and response. Australia has also developed a region-wide preparedness strategy. A key component of this strategy has included establishing a response plan that can be used by national and international responders in the event of a large-scale natural disaster. WFP and the entire humanitarian community have benefited from Australia's investment in these critical issues.

3. *Providing access to nutritious food*

Inadequate nutrition during the first 1,000 days of a child's life – the period between conception and two years of age – leads to irreversible impairment of physical and cognitive development. The evidence is clear. The prevention of undernutrition, including severe and moderate acute malnutrition, is significantly more cost-effective than treatment. The prevention of chronic undernutrition during the first 1,000 days also significantly reduces the risk of acute malnutrition.

Over the past few years, several international initiatives have been launched which provide new opportunities that should ensure better access for the hungry poor to nutritious food. The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement brings together a diverse coalition of governments, communities, international organizations and businesses to mobilise country-led action that will end child malnutrition during the critical 1,000 days and beyond. The Renewed Efforts to Address Child Hunger and Under-nutrition (REACH) initiative also works to support existing national programmes and enhances coordination between relevant stakeholders to strengthen national capacity. REACH brings together UN agencies, NGOs and governments – including finance, health, agriculture, and education departments – to align programmes at the national level.

In addition, Australia's investments have helped WFP improve the capacity for local manufacturing of nutritious products. These products include fortified blended foods and ready-to-use supplementary foods, critical for the prevention and treatment of undernutrition, while also increasing national ownership of nutrition programmes.

Australia has also provided critical political and financial support to initiatives promoting improved nutritional outcomes in Asia. With Australia's support, WFP and UNICEF are moving forward on a joint multi-year stunting



reduction initiative in the Asia-Pacific region aimed at implementing at scale a limited number of evidence-based, multi-sector interventions focused on the first 1,000 days. Over a five-year period, these interventions will be implemented under the oversight of national and local governments, with support from WFP, UNICEF and other relevant stakeholders. The programme will target one or more selected districts in two to three countries in Asia. Internationally and nationally recognized research institutes will analyse the economic and social impact and return on investment, and make recommendations for sustainable scale up.

4. Providing emergency relief and assistance

Humanitarian assistance is increasingly concentrated in conflict-affected countries where the ability of governments to provide basic services is often limited, and where access to food is affected by displacement and disruptions to market and livelihoods. Food insecurity is both a cause and a consequence of conflict, particularly in fragile states.

Ensuring access to food in emergencies is critical for maintaining health and nutrition. Food assistance also protects household assets and livelihoods of affected people and contributes to longer-term resilience as well as other food and nutrition security objectives.

Australia has always been especially responsive to WFP's emergency assistance needs, particularly in Asia; thus, helping WFP support governments' and communities' rapid crisis response.

WFP's core role of large-scale provision of cash, food or voucher assistance in response to emergencies has proven to be crucial during recent crises in the Asia-Pacific region, e.g. the Philippines, Myanmar and Pakistan. Australia has been actively involved in promoting innovative, market-based emergency response solutions to food insecurity, advancing the use of both cash and vouchers as well as value chain approaches to increasing smallholder productivity.

5. Investing in access to food and safety nets

WFP is adapting to an evolving operating global environment: evermore crisis-prone and politically complex, with an increasing number of non-traditional actors, including both funders and partners. Given the scale of food access needs, WFP focuses our investment in three areas. First, we facilitate direct access to food for the most vulnerable (e.g. direct food assistance, nutrition programmes, safety nets). Second, we employ resilience programmes that inoculate the most vulnerable against shocks and crises that would otherwise detrimentally impact their food and nutrition security. These resilience programmes include, but are not limited to, livelihood support and market development activities. Third, we implement capacity building and knowledge management programmes supporting national and local governments' ability to plan, manage, and implement social protection programmes supporting the poor and most vulnerable people.



Where functioning safety net systems exist, WFP works through these systems to rapidly, effectively and efficiently support food access in times of crisis. The G20 Development Working Group has emphasized the critical importance of embedding food security and nutrition within national safety net policies.

School feeding acts as an important safety net, and Australia's support to WFP school feeding projects are crucial. WFP is a provider of time-bound support to governments with the long-term objective of phasing out its assistance, leaving behind sustainable, cost-effective national school feeding programmes. Under the four-year agreement signed in 2009 with Australia, WFP received an annual contribution of AU\$ 10 million earmarked to support school feeding activities in seven countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, Kenya, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Nicaragua. As a result, approximately 2.7 million children have received school meals and take home rations. This multi-year funding has successfully contributed to strengthening WFP's capacity to work with governments in programme implementation and put in place strategies to help governments transition out of external support into national ownership.

WFP will be pleased to submit further formal or informal information at any stage. We are of course also ready to participate in any hearings at the Australian Senate that might further elaborate on this important matter.

I ask the Committee to fully consider the importance, as outlined above, of Australian leadership and support. The robust partnership we have built in recent years, and particularly in Asia, is one that I hope we will continue to strengthen. Together, we will achieve food and nutrition security for all.

Sincerely,

Ertharin Cousin

cc: Mr. Doug Trappett, Charge' d'Affaires, a.i., Australia Embassy, Rome
Mr. Samuel Beever, Deputy Permanent Representative to WFP