



**World Food Programme**

**Oversight Office  
Office of Inspections and Investigations**

**Inspection Report 01/2012  
Small Country Offices in ODC region**

**21 December 2012**

## INTRODUCTION

WFP is present in over 70 countries in the world. The type and level of presence varies widely. The majority of Country Offices (CO) that implement projects have a mix of national and international staff. A group of Country Offices with a particular set of issues are small Country Offices with no or very limited (international) staff at lower grades. They face issues with delegation of authority and segregation of duties, fund raising and donor interest, local procurement, etc.

The inspection reviewed a sample of small country offices and has selected the Middle East, North Africa, Europe & Central Asia (ODC) region, as it has the largest presence of this type of offices, and interest in having such an inspection was voiced by the ODC Regional Bureau. The main questions to be answered are:

**Is WFP adequately represented, and if so**

**Are Small Country Offices headed by national or junior international staff a model that can be followed?**

WFP's Fit for Purpose Organisational Design indicates a strategic review to look into "options for addressing the many concerns expressed regarding the viability and sustainability of small Country Offices". This report may provide some ideas for this review.

The report details the scope and methodology of the inspection, some background information of the visited Country Offices, and the observations and opportunities identified during the inspection.

## SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The inspection looked at all small WFP Country Offices, based on number of staff, level of person heading the office and project activities, and noted that several such offices existed in the ODC region. Within this region, five offices, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran and Jordan, were selected for the review. Although the Jordan CO is currently headed by a Country Director (CD), it was headed by a national staff member from roughly 2008 to 2011, and was therefore included in the inspection. Some basic data concerning these offices as per June 2012 is given in below table.

Country	Staffing	Projects <sup>1</sup>	Project Period	Project Budget (US\$)	Current funding levels	Annual expenditure 2011 (US\$)
Armenia	1 international + 15 national	Dev 200128	Jul10-Jun13	8,000,000	100%	7,786,733
		PRRO 100532	Jul07-Jun12	19,781,827	70.3%	
Azerbaijan	3 national	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	334,231
Georgia	7 national	PRRO 107870	Jul09-Jun12	23,348,594	40.6%	1,625,716

Iran	14 national	PRRO 102131	Jan09-Dec12	16,660,904	51.5%	6,572,308
Jordan	1 international + 14 national	EMOP 200414 EMOP 200433 <sup>2</sup>	Apr-Jul12 Jun-Dec12	1,212,926 23,832,572	100% 14.6%	396,951

<sup>1</sup> Development project (Dev); Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO); Emergency Operation (EMOP)

<sup>2</sup>Information relates to Regional EMOP covering activities in four countries

The Inspection was divided in three phases: planning; field missions; and reporting. During the planning phase, relevant information on the selected field operations were reviewed, focussing on the areas of staff resources, fund raising initiatives, donor relations, internal control issues, and local procurement activities. Relevant staff in Headquarters, the Regional Bureau and the Country Offices were consulted and a questionnaire was developed and submitted in advance to the Country Offices. An inspection work plan was prepared and shared with relevant stakeholders, and feedback was incorporated if and when necessary.

During the field missions, each country office was visited during three working days. Relevant staff was interviewed to obtain information on the inspection questionnaire and documents supporting the information obtained during interviews were reviewed. The Resident Coordinator of the United Nations was interviewed in each visited country.

After the field missions, a draft inspection report was prepared and shared with relevant stakeholders. The final inspection report takes the received comments into account and is shared with the Executive Director and relevant senior managers, as appropriate.

## COUNTRY OFFICES BACKGROUND

### Armenia

The Armenia office is headed by a P2 International staff member. The CO has 16 staff and 1 sub office. The CO implemented a PRRO with food-for-asset activities for vulnerable groups until June 2012, and is implementing a DEV project for school feeding which is foreseen to end in June 2013. The project is fully funded by one donor. The double-hatting CD arrangement for the Armenia and Georgia COs that existed since early 2008 was terminated in early 2010, when the office was headed by a national staff member (NOB) until mid-June and then an international consultant for about 1,5 month until the arrival of the current Head of Office in August 2010.

### Azerbaijan

The Azerbaijan office is headed by a National Staff member (NOB) since August 2008, when the CD went on temporary duty (TDY) to officially leave the office mid-2009. The Office has three staff and is implementing activities in support of Strategic Objective 5 (SO5). The last operations involving food aid in Azerbaijan ended in June 2008. The office is maintained upon request of the Government who provides the office with an annual contribution of US\$100,000. The CO is funded by Programme Support and Administration budget (PSA) and the government contribution.

## Georgia

The Georgia office is headed by a National Staff member (NOA) since December 2011, when the CD left to take up a new assignment. The CO has seven staff and the PRRO to assist internally displaced persons is finishing in June 2012. The PRRO is underfunded, and activities within the PRRO were reduced. No distributions were undertaken in 2012, and the office is currently foreseen to close after the PRRO has been finalised.

## Iran

The Iran office is headed by a National Staff member (NOC), who became the officer in charge in August 2008 when the Country Director retired. The CO has 14 staff and is implementing a PRRO to assist Afghani and Iraqi refugees, which is planned to finish in December 2012. The PRRO is having funding issues; its main funding source is multilateral. The office undertakes a significant number of activities for private sector fundraising.

## Jordan

The Jordan office is currently headed by a Country Director (P5), and has 15 staff. Prior to the arrival of the CD at the end of 2011, national staff headed the office after the retirement of the previous CD in February 2007. The first national staff member (NOA) who headed the office starting February 2007 retired in January 2008, after which another national staff member (G6 then NOA) took over and headed the office until end 2011. The last development project ended in late 2007, after which the office was focussing on SO5 activities and did not have projects with a food component. In 2012, the office had an immediate response EMOP to assist Syrian refugees that finished in June 2012, and will be implementing its part of the Regional PRRO to assist the Syrian population (together with Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey) from July to December 2012.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The following chapter provides an overview of the main observations made during the inspection, and the opportunities that follow from these observations for improvements in the organisation. The answers to the main questions asked during the inspection seem to be that WFP can be adequately represented by small Country Offices, but that a framework needs to be developed if WFP does wants to continue with this model. The observations and opportunities are grouped as follows:

1. Strategies for transitions between small, medium, and large Country Offices.
2. Small Country Office management guidelines
3. Regional Bureau guidance
4. Resource mobilisation

### **1. TRANSITIONAL STRATEGIES**

Observation: Due to the type of operations, WFP Country Offices fluctuate in size. There is no corporate strategy to assist Country Offices in these transitions between small, medium, and large operations, or from international to no international staff presence. No minimal required presence is established and one CO had only one national professional staff member. In the context of this

report, the size of the CO is based on the grade of the staff member heading an office, a small office being an office headed by a national or junior international staff member.

Opportunity - checklists: The Organisation could benefit from having checklists in place that assist managers in the transition between small, medium, and large operations. Various factors that influence the possibilities of the Country Offices such as available funds and number of staff could be taken as variables, and examples of issues that could be included in such a checklist are as follows. The functional title of the person left in charge of the CO; is the person temporarily assuming the responsibilities of heading the CO and is therefore officer in charge, and if so for how long is an “officer in charge” title appropriate, or will it be a more permanent set up which requires a specific role with appropriate authorities delegated to that role. The terms of reference of various staff might need to be adjusted to reflect the new functions to be performed in the new setup of the office. The local committees might need to be adjusted to ensure proper segregation of duties with the available resources in the office.

Opportunity – alternative representation: The Country Offices visited during the inspection seemed to be functioning well. No major problems were noted in the overall management of the offices and the head of offices seemed to be respected by the host governments and the UN community. Issues faced were dealt with on an ad hoc basis and with support from the Regional Bureau. Although the reasons for having a national or junior professional heading the office were not predetermined, the Organisation could consider expanding this type of offices as a way to reduce funding needs for a country office, and to tap into the talent available nationally. Other mechanisms to explore are rather than having an office, having a liaison officer operating from the most relevant government or government support body in a country, or having an office with the main objective to raise funds rather than implement projects.

Opportunity - Strategic Objective 5<sup>1</sup> activities: Some of the visited offices were not implementing a project<sup>2</sup> mainly due to funding restrictions. Instead, capacity building activities to hand-over food assistance strategies to the government, part of WFP’s SO5, were undertaken, as they can be done on a smaller scale and requiring less funding. The organisation could expand on the impact of such activities by developing proper reporting mechanisms to tap on the lessons learned from these activities, and find activities that could be replicated in other countries. Currently, information flows are geared towards projects, and very little information from activities outside projects reach the mainstream information systems in Headquarters. For example, Executive Briefs or other reporting tools could be instituted for non-project activities and the Annual Performance Report could include indicators to measure these non-project activities.

## **2. SMALL COUNTRY OFFICE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

Observation: The five COs visited were, at the time of the inspection or within the last year, headed by a national staff or junior international staff member. The COs were not purposely established in this manner, but due to different circumstances evolved as such. All offices were at some time in the

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<sup>1</sup> SO5 is: “Strengthen the capacities of countries to reduce hunger, including through hand-over strategies and local purchase”.

<sup>2</sup> Project in this context relates to an EMOP, PRRO, DEV, or Special Operation.

past headed by a CD and in one case had transitioned back into an office run by a CD, after being headed by a national officer for a number of years. Due to the absence of a strategy to move from an office with a CD to an office headed by a national staff or junior international staff member, there was no clear framework or design for the functioning of these offices at the onset of the period in which there was no CD. Without such a framework, issues that arose in the Country Offices related to delegation of authorities and segregation of duties were dealt with on a need basis, resulting in after-the-fact solutions and inconsistencies between Country Offices.

Opportunity – functional title: There is currently only one functional title for a person heading a Country Office, which is Country Director, and this title is limited to grades P5 to D2. There are no differences in duties and accountabilities in the generic job profile for Country Directors at P5, D1 or D2 level while the expectations and the capacity of the Country Offices are different. Various audit reports have pointed this out and recommended alignment. Taking this further, a functional title with the appropriate duties and accountabilities attached to it could be developed for COs headed by more junior international staff as well as national staff.

Opportunity – delegation of authority: Delegation of Authority in WFP is linked to a job title. For country offices, in most cases the authority is delegated to the Country Director. Therefore, when an office is not headed by a Country Director, there is a lack of clarity on delegation of authorities. Clearly establishing such delegations of authority for different levels of staff heading the office could enhance the functioning of such offices, and regularise issues that currently require case-by-case approval from the Executive Director. Examples of delegated authorities to consider are procurement authority, financial authority to designate certifying and approving officers, bank signatories and petty cash holders and cashiers; the authority to sign Field Level Agreements with Cooperating Partners and agreements with private sector donors; and the authority to make human resource management decisions.

Opportunity – WINGS: WINGS profiles are related to generic job profiles and therefore the same lack of clarity as with the delegation of authority exists for authority levels in WINGS. Once a framework for appropriate levels of delegated authority for different country office set-ups is developed, this should be aligned with the profiles in WINGS. As WINGS is an online system that does not require the physical presence of all persons involved in the approval and payment process in one location, alternative models with approvers at different locations could be considered, in order to obtain the desired levels of internal control.

Opportunity – segregation of duties: Country Offices with a limited number of staff members face difficulties in setting up appropriate local committees, like the non-food procurement committee, the property survey board, etc. Rules and regulations provide the requirements in segregation of duties, but do not always assist in finding solutions when limited staff is available. Guidelines could therefore be established providing various alternative solutions to ensure appropriate delegation of authority by detailing for example which committees could be done by the same staff member, how lower level or temporary staff could be included, where staff from other UN agencies or other WFP offices could be used.

### **3. REGIONAL BUREAU GUIDANCE**

Observation: The visited Country Offices indicated that the Regional Bureau regularly visited the offices. While indeed the (deputy) regional directors undertook visits to most of the country offices, there were significantly less technical visits undertaken by the Bureau.

Opportunity – technical visits: Aware of the situation in the country, the country office, and the region, the Regional Bureau is particularly well placed to provide targeted guidance to Country Offices. In particular for areas in which the country office lacks the expertise or experience due to limited staffing resources, guidance and training from the Regional Bureau could improve the functioning of the office.

### **4. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION**

Observation: Two of the visited Country Offices organised various activities to raise funds from private sector donors. One CO was particularly successful, having raised almost US\$400,000 in cash in 2011 plus US\$540,000 in miscellaneous contributions in the form of space in printed media (US\$500,000), teasers (US\$20,000) and pro-bono services (sale of visibility items, US\$20,000). Despite the successful local fundraising, the CO did not allocate any budget for fundraising activities. Further, the corporate information on donations does not differentiate between corporately and locally raised funds, specifically for private sector donations. It is therefore not clear which Country Offices are successful in raising funds locally, including through private sector partnerships.

Opportunity – resource mobilisation: The achievements in raising local funds were particularly interesting considering the size of the office and the number of staff working on advocacy and donor relations activities. Given the global reduction in funds received through government donors and therefore the growing interest in private sector fundraising, initiatives as observed in the CO could be further developed with appropriate assistance from the Private Partnerships unit. In particular, guidance on how much funds should be set aside for fundraising and advocacy activities, and what type of activities would be appropriate for this purpose could be provided, as well as specific information on which country offices raised what amount of funds locally could stimulate Country Offices to increase their efforts for local fund raising, and provides recognition to the Country Offices that are successful in this respect. With the increased decentralisation of WFP, a staff could possibly be placed in the Regional Bureau to assist in developing similar initiatives in other countries in the region, and providing advice and backstopping for the various problems that were encountered by the office as one of the pioneers in this area.

### **CONCLUSION**

The inspection found that the visited offices were generally functioning well. Good relationships were maintained with the host governments as well as with the Country team, and the offices were found to adequately represent WFP. A couple of the offices raised significant amounts of funds from private sector donors, contributing to the funding of their activities and the running of the offices.

If a proper design is established for the functioning of this type of office, and a framework for assistance, oversight and training by the Regional Bureau and Headquarters is developed, small country offices headed by national or junior international staff is a model that can be followed, and could even save costs whilst providing new opportunities for WFP.