

Towards effective and sustainable seed relief activities

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PLANT
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AND PROTECTION
PAPER

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Report of the Workshop on Effective
and Sustainable Seed Relief Activities
Rome, 26–28 May 2003

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Foreword

Seed is a farmer's most essential input, especially in times of crisis. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been an increasing incidence of emergency situations stemming from natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, as well as from civil wars and ethnic conflicts. Seed relief activities aim to contribute to food and livelihood security in such situations by ensuring that farmers, especially vulnerable farmers, have access to seed (i.e. planting material) of adequate quality.

In May 2003, FAO, together with its partner organizations, convened an international stakeholders' workshop on effective and sustainable seed relief activities. This brought together stakeholders from FAO, relief agencies, donors, technical organizations and emergency-prone countries to exchange lessons learned in the area of seed relief; to identify gaps and needs in the development of tools, guidance and methodologies; and to agree on recommendations for further work. This report contains the results of that workshop, including a number of case studies of seed relief activities in several African countries. The lessons learned have been translated into a set of guiding principles that have already been adopted by FAO's Emergency Coordination Group and are being progressively applied in the Organization's emergency operations.

The results of the workshop demonstrate that the international community has refined its understanding of seed relief in recent years. We have learned to distinguish between lack of availability of seed and constraints on access to seed that commonly result from poverty. We now appreciate the resilience of local seed systems and the importance of local markets in facilitating access to seeds. We also know that relief interventions have to be targeted to the specific needs of farmers and to be appropriate to the nature of the emergency situation.

As FAO continues to reflect on its own operational activities as well as to fulfil its normative role of helping to disseminate "best practice" worldwide, it is also well aware of the challenges ahead. Better needs assessment, targeted evaluations and a broader repertoire of responses are all key elements on the path to becoming more effective. However, no single blueprint will suffice. Rather, in this environment, in which emergencies are becoming even more complex and often more protracted, we need to focus also on the processes that will help us and our partners continue to adapt, learn and deliver appropriate responses. In this respect, we would like to highlight the important role of international organizations, including FAO, and especially of member states, in building capacity to understand, devise and implement more appropriate emergency response actions, and of our donor community who influence what type of actions will or will not be supported.

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Acronyms

AGPS	Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service (FAO)
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ASALs	arid and semi-arid lands
CBO	community-based organization
CIAT	International Center for Tropical Agriculture
CN	CARE Norway
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSPD	conventional seed procurement and distribution
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DINA	National Directorate of Agriculture (Mozambique)
ECG	Emergency Coordination Group (FAO)
ESAE	Agricultural Sector in Economic Development Service (FAO)
ESCG	Global Information and Early Warning Service (FAO)
ESE	Ethiopian Seed Enterprise
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning System Network
FIVIMS	Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FAO)
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System
GMO	genetically modified organism
GPA	Global Plan of Action (FAO)
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
IDP	internally displaced person
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IDU	FAO Input Distribution Unit (Mozambique)
ITF	input trade fair
INIA	Instituto Nacional de Investigação Agronómica (Mozambique)
KARI	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
NAIA	National Agricultural Input Authority (Ethiopia)
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of USAID
PA	peasant association
PGRFA	plant genetic resources for food and agriculture
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
QDS	quality declared seed
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SSF	seed security framework
SSP	seed system profile
SVC	subvillage committee
SVF	seed vouchers and fairs
TCE	Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (FAO)
TCEO	Emergency Operations Service (FAO)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UN	United Nations
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations

Executive summary

1. The workshop *Effective and Sustainable Seed Relief Activities* was held at the headquarters of FAO in Rome, 26–28 May 2003. The aim of the workshop was to improve the effectiveness of seed relief interventions and the contribution they can make to sustainable improvements in seed, food and livelihood security.
2. The workshop brought together over 70 stakeholders from FAO, relief agencies, donors, technical organizations and emergency-prone countries to exchange lessons learned in the area of seed relief; to identify gaps and needs in the development of tools, guidance and methodologies; and to agree on recommendations for further collaborative work.

THE WORKSHOP AND ITS CONCLUSIONS

3. The following points were agreed by the workshop participants in plenary.
 - a) The workshop participants recognized that there are new challenges and opportunities for seed relief, arising from the increased incidence of emergencies, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, evolving concepts within the humanitarian and development communities and the availability of a wider range of response options. “More of the same” is not an option.
 - b) Lessons from independent assessments of food aid and humanitarian water and sanitation interventions were reviewed. It was noted that many of these were also applicable to seed aid.
 - c) Seed relief interventions must be based on an understanding of seed systems and the dimensions of seed availability, seed access and seed quality.
 - d) The complexity of seed systems and the diverse contexts in which emergencies unfold require a range of responses. There is no single ideal response. The context is changing, especially as the prevalence of repeated shocks and protracted emergencies increases. Rapid-onset one-off crises are now seen as the exceptions.
 - e) The most widely used response has been direct seed distribution. FAO and many agencies now have wide experience of this approach and have identified a number of strengths and weaknesses (for example, see Boxes 4 and 5 of the background paper, *Understanding seed systems and strengthening seed security* in this report).
 - f) The workshop reviewed in detail a number of case studies using the seed fairs and vouchers approach – in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Mozambique. In some of these cases, a direct comparison with direct seed distribution was possible. In Burundi, the experience with quality seed production was also examined, and in Ethiopia the experience with local procurement was presented.
 - g) From the case studies presented, a number of features of the seed vouchers and fairs approach were noted. It builds on local systems; facilitates farmer choice; benefits farmers and traders, including women; and can stimulate the local economy. Some issues that merit further examination involve scaling-up, institutionalization, seed quality and cost effectiveness.
 - h) The workshop discussed the possible wider application of vouchers, or cash, for facilitating access to tools, livestock medicines and other agricultural inputs available locally.

- i) The choice of interventions should be based on a needs assessment and matched to the context according to objective criteria. (Table 1 [page 35] provides one analysis of the choice of interventions.)
- j) Seed-related responses are not necessarily appropriate in all situations; nor do they constitute an automatic priority action for disaster-affected populations. Income generation may be more important, for example. Long-term “safety nets” may be needed.
- k) Where seed-related needs are apparent, they may reflect poverty rather than a shortage of seed *per se*.
- l) It is therefore necessary to look at seed relief within the broader context of food and livelihood security.
- m) This broader context implies a need for an explicit process with the following steps:
 - i) preparedness
 - ii) needs assessment
 - iii) choice of intervention
 - iv) implementation
 - v) monitoring and evaluationTable 2 (page 36) provides a list of some of the tools and guidance available to assist decision-making and implementation of these steps.
- n) The workshop recognized the crucial importance of local markets as a source of seed for farmers, especially in difficult times. Analysis of market functioning should be a key component of needs assessments. Interventions should seek to strengthen such markets and not undermine them.
- o) Appropriate seed-based interventions can have impacts beyond seed delivery, including strengthening of the local seed system; stimulating entrepreneurial activity; empowering farmers, traders and rural communities, including women; and making use of and maintaining agricultural biodiversity. Effective seed relief activities should build on the coping capacities of communities and avoid creating dependency on repeated input-based relief.
- p) *Preparedness*: given that many emergency situations are foreseeable, recurrent or long-term, more emphasis should be given to preparedness, including the development of seed system profiles or baseline seed security assessments for disaster-prone countries. Some donors are willing to consider funding for such work.
- q) *Needs assessment*: seed needs cannot be simply extrapolated from food aid needs (as is current practice). Instead there needs to be a diagnosis of the problem and an analysis of the causes. Emergencies need to be understood in terms of livelihoods and loss of entitlements. Needs assessments should distinguish between problems related to seed availability and seed access. A number of tools and guidelines are available or under development and testing to assist such needs assessment at various scales.
- r) *Choice of intervention*: there are a number of possible seed-related interventions. These include food aid to protect seed, direct seed distribution (including the variant of local committee purchasing), provision of vouchers or cash to farmers, seed fairs (with or without vouchers), local seed production, support to local grain traders and markets, access to or development of better varieties, and improving farmers’ seed quality. Selection of the appropriate intervention should be guided by objective criteria.
- s) *Implementation*: capacity to implement some of these options is limited. This restricted capacity and other constraints to implementation need to be addressed. More attention needs to be given to the institutionalization of approaches and to

capacity building at local and national levels (as is being done in Mozambique, for example).

- t) Beneficiary targeting of seed relief interventions need to be improved. Activities should be designed to address explicitly the needs of women. The various approaches could benefit from evaluation and the identification of best practice.
- u) *Evaluation*: both formative evaluation (to facilitate learning by doing) and independent objective evaluations are required. Evaluation is needed immediately following the interventions, in the medium term and in the longer term. Short- and medium-term evaluations should be provided for in-project documents. Evaluation criteria should span immediate and broader impacts, including contribution to food and livelihood security and sustainability.

THE GOAL AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SEED RELIEF

4. The following goal of seed relief activities was used in the workshop:
 - to contribute to food and livelihood security by ensuring that farmers, especially vulnerable farmers, have access to seed (planting material) of adequate quality.*
5. This goal was subsequently adopted by the FAO Emergency Coordination Group (ECG; Rome, 20 June 2003), which noted the following implications:
6. The workshop adopted a set of guiding principles for seed relief. These were developed on the basis of a draft prepared by the internal FAO seed system relief discussion group. Subsequently, they were endorsed by the FAO ECG (Rome, 20 June 2003). The guiding principles are reproduced in Box 1.¹

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO FAO

7. The workshop prepared the following recommendations specific to FAO that were subsequently endorsed by the ECG:
 - a) The workshop noted the paradoxes that FAO does not implement food aid, yet carries out food supply assessments jointly with the World Food Programme (WFP), and that the Organization implements seed aid and other interventions aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, yet has little capacity to assess needs for such interventions. The workshop suggested that the scope of the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) and the Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping Systems (FIVIMS) be broadened to include needs assessments relevant to seed security and other aspects of agricultural productivity. Seed-related information in the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources should be linked to GIEWS. Additionally, it is recommended that consideration be given to integrating the assessments carried out by the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division and those carried out by the Global Information and Early Warning Service to include such assessments, within an overall framework of livelihood security.
 - b) More attention should be given to the management of information relevant to emergency relief operations in FAO to facilitate learning by doing. Needs assessments and the design of emergency operations requires an interdisciplinary approach and should draw more effectively upon data and expertise

¹ The only difference between the set of guiding principles adopted at the workshop and those subsequently endorsed by the ECG is the replacement of “to facilitate access to varieties” by “to facilitate access to *crops and varieties*” and the addition of the words “including nutritional needs” in the latter at the sixth point.

BOX 1

Guiding principles for seed relief

- A needs assessment should underpin any decisions to undertake seed relief and guide the choice among possible interventions. This needs assessment should be holistic, putting seed security in the context of livelihood security.
- Seed relief interventions have to be clearly matched to the context (for example, a crisis caused by drought may require very different actions from a crisis caused by war). By supporting food production, seed relief should decrease dependence on repeated food aid.
- Seed relief activities should aim both (i) to be effective with the immediate objective of facilitating access to appropriate planting material; and (ii) to contribute to the restoration, rehabilitation or improvement of agricultural systems in the longer term.
- Ideally, considerations of seed system sustainability should be built into seed interventions from the beginning. As a minimum, seed aid should do no harm to farming systems. Thus, emergency relief activities should support local seed system development, ideally by integrating long-term needs into the design of the project.
- Seed relief activities should be built upon a solid understanding of all the seed systems farmers use and the role they have in supporting livelihoods. The local system is usually more important to farmers' seed security and has been shown to be quite resilient. Depending on the context, the focus in an emergency should normally be on keeping the local seed system operational. One practical problem is that seed systems are often not sufficiently understood, especially in emergency situations. Hence, there is a need for more emphasis on understanding seed systems, their role in supporting livelihoods, and needs assessment.
- Seed relief interventions should facilitate farmers' choices of crops and varieties. Seed relief interventions should aim to improve, or at least maintain, seed quality and to facilitate access to crops and varieties that are adapted to environmental conditions and farmers' needs, including nutritional needs.
- Monitoring and evaluation should be built into all seed relief interventions, to facilitate learning by doing and thereby to improve interventions.
- An information system should be put in place to improve institutional learning and to function as a repository of information gained from cumulative experience. Such information systems should be institutionalized at national levels, to the greatest extent possible.
- A strategy to move from the acute emergency response to a capacity building or development phase should be included in the design of the intervention.

in other departments (including the Economic and Social Department as well as the Agriculture Department, for example) and in other institutions.

- c) Administrative procedures, including procurement procedures, should be reviewed to facilitate emergency operations and allow for innovative approaches.
- d) FAO should promote among its partners greater attention to preparedness, including the development of seed system profiles or baseline seed security assessments for disaster-prone countries, and should explore how to scale up the use of seed fairs and vouchers, *inter alia*, building upon the Organization's experience in scaling up farmer field schools.
- e) The workshop recognized that there are many opportunities for strengthening partnerships between FAO and other organizations. FAO should strengthen its relationship with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local

institutions in project implementation, and should promote a two-way learning process between the Organization and NGOs. Greater recognition should be given to NGO contributions.

- f) FAO should note the relevance of the London Convention on Food Aid.
8. The outputs of the workshop were subsequently considered by the ECG, which oversees the Organization's emergency operations. The Group recommended that the outputs also be considered by two FAO intergovernmental committees: the Committee on Food Security and the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.

Note de synthèse

1. L'Atelier sur les interventions efficaces et durables d'assistance semencière d'urgence s'est tenu du 26 au 28 mai 2003 à Rome, au Siège de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture. Il visait à renforcer l'efficacité des interventions d'assistance semencière d'urgence et leur contribution possible à une amélioration durable de la sécurité semencière et alimentaire et des moyens d'existence.
2. Cet atelier a rassemblé plus de 70 intervenants représentant la FAO, des organismes humanitaires, des bailleurs de fonds, des organisations techniques et des pays prédisposés aux situations de crise. Ils ont mis en commun les leçons tirées dans le domaine de l'assistance semencière d'urgence, ont recensé les lacunes et les besoins en matière d'élaboration d'outils, d'orientations et de méthodologies, et sont convenus de recommandations visant à approfondir la collaboration.

L'ATELIER ET SES CONCLUSIONS

3. Les participants à l'atelier ont adopté les points suivants en séance plénière:
 - a) Les participants à l'atelier ont admis que l'assistance semencière d'urgence donnait lieu à de nouveaux défis et à de nouvelles possibilités, du fait d'une multiplication des situations d'urgence, de la pandémie de VIH/SIDA, de l'évolution des notions parmi les communautés concernées par l'aide humanitaire et le développement et de la disponibilité d'un plus large éventail de réponses possibles. Refaire ce qui l'a déjà été n'est pas une option.
 - b) Les participants ont examiné les leçons des évaluations indépendantes de l'aide alimentaire et des interventions humanitaires en matière d'eau et d'assainissement. Il a été noté que, dans une large mesure, elles s'appliquaient également à l'aide sous forme de semences.
 - c) Les interventions d'assistance semencière d'urgence doivent s'appuyer sur la compréhension des systèmes semenciers et sur les aspects des semences se rapportant à la disponibilité, à l'accès et à la qualité.
 - d) La complexité des systèmes semenciers et la diversité des situations d'urgence nécessitent des réponses multiples sans qu'il en existe une qui soit idéale et unique. Le contexte évolue, notamment par une multiplication des chocs à répétition et des situations d'urgence prolongées. Les crises ponctuelles font désormais figure d'exception.
 - e) La distribution directe de semences constitue la réponse la plus largement utilisée. La FAO de même que de nombreuses institutions peuvent aujourd'hui s'appuyer sur une vaste expérience de cette démarche et en ont recensé différents points forts et points faibles (des exemples figurent aux encadrés 4 et 5 du document d'information de l'atelier, qui se trouve dans le présent rapport).
 - f) Les participants à l'atelier ont procédé à un examen poussé de diverses études de cas sur une démarche reposant sur des foires semencières et la distribution de bons d'achat de semences – au Burundi, en Éthiopie, au Kenya et au Mozambique. Dans certains cas, il a été possible de procéder à une comparaison avec une distribution directe de semences. Les participants ont également examiné l'expérience burundaise de production de semences de qualité et se sont vu présenter les essais d'achats locaux mis en place en Éthiopie.
 - g) Plusieurs caractéristiques des démarches s'appuyant sur les bons d'achat de semences et sur les foires semencières ont été relevées à partir des études de cas présentées. Ainsi, elles reposent sur les systèmes locaux, facilitent le choix des

agriculteurs, profitent aux exploitants et aux négociants, y compris les femmes, et peuvent encourager l'économie locale. Parmi les questions qui méritent un examen plus approfondi, figurent la transposition à une plus grande échelle, l'institutionnalisation, la qualité des semences et le rapport coût-efficacité.

- h) Les participants ont discuté d'un éventuel élargissement du recours aux bons d'achats, ou de dons en espèces, visant à faciliter l'accès aux outils, aux médicaments vétérinaires et aux autres intrants agricoles disponibles sur le plan local.
- i) Le choix des interventions doit se fonder sur une évaluation des besoins et se conformer à la situation selon des critères objectifs. (Le tableau 1 [page 35] présente une analyse du choix d'interventions.)
- j) Les interventions sous forme de semences ne conviennent pas nécessairement à toutes les situations et ne constituent pas automatiquement une priorité pour les populations victimes de catastrophes, pour lesquelles la création de revenus peut être plus importante, par exemple. Il se peut qu'il faille mettre en place des « filets de sécurité » à long terme.
- k) Lorsqu'il existe, manifestement, des besoins en matière de semences, ceux-ci peuvent davantage résulter de la pauvreté que d'une véritable pénurie de semences.
- l) En conséquence, nous devons appréhender l'assistance semencière d'urgence sous l'angle plus général du renforcement de la sécurité alimentaire et des moyens d'existence.
- m) Ce contexte plus large sous-entend qu'il faille instaurer un processus explicite s'articulant autour des étapes suivantes:
 - i) planification préalable
 - ii) évaluation des besoins
 - iii) choix d'intervention
 - iv) mise en œuvre
 - v) contrôle et évaluation

Le tableau 2 (page 36) dresse une liste non exhaustive des outils et des orientations existant pour aider à la prise de décision et à la mise en œuvre de ces mesures.
- n) L'atelier a admis que les marchés locaux revêtaient une importance cruciale pour les agriculteurs, en leur fournissant des semences, notamment en période difficile. L'analyse du fonctionnement des marchés doit être un élément fondamental de l'évaluation des besoins. Les interventions doivent viser à consolider ces marchés et non à les menacer.
- o) Des interventions adaptées sous forme de semences peuvent avoir des répercussions qui vont au-delà de la seule livraison de semences. Ainsi, elles peuvent, par exemple, renforcer le système semencier local, encourager l'esprit d'entreprise, accroître les capacités d'action des agriculteurs, des négociants et des communautés rurales, y compris les femmes, et s'appuyer sur la biodiversité agricole et la préserver. Pour être efficaces, les activités d'assistance semencière d'urgence doivent reposer sur les capacités des communautés à faire face aux problèmes et éviter de créer une dépendance vis-à-vis d'un secours répété sous forme d'intrants.
- p) *Planification préalable*: Dans la mesure où de nombreuses situations d'urgence sont prévues à l'avance, récurrentes ou s'inscrivent dans le long terme, il conviendrait d'insister davantage sur la planification préalable, y compris en ce qui concerne l'élaboration de modèles de systèmes semenciers ou l'évaluation des besoins de base en matière de sécurité semencière des pays exposés au risque de catastrophes. Certains donateurs sont disposés à envisager un financement pour ces activités.
- q) *Évaluation des besoins*: On ne peut se contenter d'extrapoler les besoins en semences à partir des besoins en aide alimentaire (comme cela se fait

actuellement). Il convient plutôt de diagnostiquer le problème et d'en analyser les causes. Les situations d'urgence doivent être appréhendées sous l'angle des moyens d'existence et des pertes de droits. Les évaluations des besoins devraient établir une distinction entre les problèmes liés à la disponibilité des semences et ceux ayant trait à l'accès aux semences. Divers outils et directives existent ou sont en cours d'élaboration et d'essai afin de contribuer à une telle évaluation des besoins à divers niveaux.

- r) *Choix d'intervention*: Il existe de nombreux types d'interventions possibles sous forme de semences, entre autres: aide alimentaire de protection des semences; distribution directe de semences (y compris l'achat par un comité local); distribution de bons d'achat / d'argent aux agriculteurs; foires semencières (+/- bons d'achat); production locale de semences; appui aux négociants et aux marchés semenciers locaux; accès à de meilleures variétés et élaboration de telles variétés; amélioration de la qualité des semences utilisées par les agriculteurs. Le choix de l'intervention adaptée doit être guidé par des critères objectifs.
- s) *Mise en œuvre*: La capacité de mettre en œuvre certaines de ces options est restreinte. Il convient de trouver une solution à ce problème, ainsi qu'à d'autres obstacles. Il faut accorder une plus grande attention à l'institutionnalisation des approches et au renforcement des capacités aux niveaux local et national (comme cela a été fait au Mozambique, par exemple).
- t) Il faut améliorer le ciblage des bénéficiaires des interventions d'assistance semencière d'urgence. Les activités doivent être conçues pour répondre de manière explicite aux besoins des femmes. L'évaluation et l'identification des meilleures pratiques existantes pourraient profiter aux diverses approches possibles.
- u) *Évaluation*: Il est nécessaire de procéder à des évaluations formatives (destinées à faciliter l'apprentissage par la pratique) et à des évaluations indépendantes objectives. Elles doivent être réalisées dans la foulée directe des interventions, à moyen terme et à plus long terme. Les descriptifs de projet doivent prévoir les évaluations à court et à moyen terme. Les critères retenus engloberont les répercussions immédiates et plus générales, notamment la contribution à la sécurité alimentaire, aux moyens d'existence et à la durabilité.

OBJECTIF DE L'ASSISTANCE SEMENCIÈRE D'URGENCE ET PRINCIPES DIRECTEURS

4. L'atelier s'est concentré sur l'objectif suivant pour les activités d'assistance semencière d'urgence:

renforcer la sécurité alimentaire et les moyens d'existence des populations en garantissant l'accès des agriculteurs, et tout particulièrement des plus vulnérables d'entre eux, à des semences (matériel végétal) de qualité satisfaisante.

5. Cet objectif a, par la suite, été adopté par le Groupe de coordination pour les situations d'urgence de la FAO (Rome, 20 juin 2003), qui a noté les conséquences reprises ci-après.
6. L'atelier a adopté un ensemble de principes directeurs devant régir l'assistance semencière d'urgence. Ils ont été élaborés à partir d'un projet réalisé pour le groupe interne de discussion sur les secours aux systèmes semenciers de la FAO, avant d'être entérinés par le Groupe de coordination pour les situations d'urgence (Rome, 20 juin 2003). Ces principes directeurs sont repris à l'encadré 1, tels qu'ils ont été adoptés par le Groupe de coordination.¹

¹ L'unique différence entre l'ensemble de principes directeurs adoptés à l'atelier et ceux entérinés par la suite par le Groupe de coordination pour les situations d'urgence a consisté à remplacer «à faciliter l'accès aux variétés» par «à faciliter l'accès aux cultures et aux variétés» et à ajouter «y compris les besoins nutritionnels» à la fin du point 6.

ENCADRÉ 1

Principes directeurs pour l'assistance semencière d'urgence:

- Une évaluation des besoins devrait être à la base de toute décision d'octroyer l'assistance semencière d'urgence et orienter le choix entre des interventions possibles. Cette évaluation des besoins devrait être complète, plaçant la sécurité semencière dans le contexte de la sécurité des moyens de subsistance.
- Les interventions d'assistance semencière d'urgence doivent à l'évidence être adaptées au contexte (par exemple, une crise provoquée par la sécheresse peut nécessiter des actions très différentes d'une crise provoquée par la guerre). En appuyant la production vivrière, l'assistance semencière d'urgence devrait réduire la dépendance à l'égard d'une aide alimentaire suivie.
- Les activités d'assistance semencière d'urgence devraient viser à la fois: i) à être efficaces avec l'objectif immédiat de faciliter l'accès à un matériel végétal approprié; et ii) contribuer à la reprise, au relèvement et à l'amélioration des systèmes agricoles à long terme.
- L'idéal serait que la durabilité du système semencier soit automatiquement prise en compte dès le départ dans les interventions semencières. Au minimum, l'aide semencière ne devrait pas porter atteinte aux systèmes agricoles. Les activités de secours d'urgence devraient donc appuyer le développement du système semencier local, de préférence en intégrant les besoins à long terme dans la conception des projets.
- Les activités d'assistance semencière d'urgence devraient être fondées sur une connaissance approfondie de tous les systèmes semenciers que les agriculteurs utilisent et du rôle qu'ils jouent dans l'appui des moyens de subsistance. Le système local est généralement plus important pour la sécurité semencière des agriculteurs et il a été démontré qu'il est très souple. Selon le contexte, en cas d'urgence, il faudrait surtout, de façon générale, s'efforcer de maintenir opérationnel le système semencier local. L'un des problèmes pratiques est que souvent, les systèmes semenciers ne sont pas suffisamment connus, en particulier dans les situations d'urgence. Il est donc nécessaire de mettre davantage l'accent sur la connaissance des systèmes semenciers, sur le rôle d'appui des moyens de subsistance et l'évaluation des besoins.
- Les interventions d'assistance semencière d'urgence devraient faciliter le choix, par les agriculteurs, des plantes cultivées et des variétés. Ces interventions devraient viser à améliorer, ou au moins à maintenir, la qualité des semences, et à faciliter l'accès aux cultures et aux variétés qui sont adaptées à l'environnement et aux besoins des agriculteurs, y compris les besoins nutritionnels.
- Le suivi et l'évaluation devraient faire partie automatiquement de toutes les interventions d'assistance semencière d'urgence, afin de faciliter l'apprentissage par l'action et par conséquent d'améliorer les interventions;
- Un système d'information devrait être mis en place pour améliorer l'apprentissage institutionnel et en tant qu'archives de données d'expérience. Ces systèmes d'information devraient être institutionnalisés au plan national dans la mesure du possible.
- Une stratégie de passage de l'intervention en cas de crise aiguë au renforcement des capacités ou à la phase de développement devrait être incorporée dans la conception de l'intervention.

RECOMMANDATIONS SPÉCIFIQUES POUR LA FAO

7. L'atelier a préparé, à l'intention de la FAO, les recommandations spécifiques exposées ci-après, lesquelles ont par la suite été entérinées par le Groupe de coordination pour les situations d'urgence de la FAO:
 - a) Les participants à l'atelier ont noté qu'il était paradoxal que la FAO ne réalise aucune activité d'aide alimentaire, alors même qu'elle procède à des évaluations des disponibilités alimentaires en collaboration avec le Programme alimentaire mondial. L'Organisation fournit par ailleurs des semences dans le cadre de programmes de secours agricole et d'autres interventions visant à accroître la productivité agricole, bien que ses capacités à évaluer les besoins en la matière soient limitées. Les participants à l'atelier ont proposé d'élargir la portée du Système mondial d'information et d'alerte rapide (SMIAR) et des Systèmes d'information et de cartographie de l'insécurité alimentaire et de la vulnérabilité (SICIAV) afin d'y intégrer l'évaluation des besoins liés à la sécurité alimentaire et d'autres aspects de la productivité agricole. Enfin, il convient d'établir des passerelles entre les informations sur les semences diffusées par le biais du Système mondial d'information et d'alerte rapide sur les ressources phylogénétiques et le SMIAR. Il est de surcroît recommandé d'envisager une intégration des évaluations menées par la Division des opérations d'urgence et de la réhabilitation (TCE) et par le Service mondial d'information et d'alerte rapide, afin de les inscrire dans un cadre général de renforcement des moyens d'existence.
 - b) Il faut porter une plus grande attention à la question de la gestion des informations relatives aux opérations de secours d'urgence de la FAO afin de faciliter le processus d'apprentissage par la pratique. L'évaluation des besoins et la conception des interventions de secours d'urgence doivent s'appuyer sur une approche interdisciplinaire et mettre davantage à profit les données et l'expérience dont disposent d'autres départements (notamment le Département économique et social et le Département de l'agriculture) et d'autres organisations.
 - c) Les procédures administratives, et notamment celles concernant la passation des marchés, doivent être révisées afin de faciliter les opérations d'urgence et l'application de méthodes innovantes.
 - d) La FAO doit encourager ses partenaires à porter une plus grande attention à la préparation de leurs interventions, notamment en ce qui concerne l'élaboration de modèles de systèmes semenciers ou l'évaluation des besoins de base en matière de sécurité semencière des pays exposés au risque de catastrophes. L'Organisation doit par ailleurs déterminer les moyens de transposer à une plus grande échelle les interventions axées, entre autres, sur l'organisation de foires semencières et la distribution de bons d'achat, en s'appuyant sur l'expérience qu'elle a accumulée en la matière dans le cadre des écoles pratiques d'agriculteurs.
 - e) Selon les participants à l'atelier, les possibilités de renforcement des partenariats entre la FAO et d'autres organisations sont nombreuses. La FAO doit tisser des liens plus étroits avec les ONG et les institutions locales, et encourager l'apprentissage mutuel entre les ONG et l'Organisation. Le rôle des ONG mérite par ailleurs d'être plus largement reconnu.
 - f) La FAO doit reconnaître la pertinence de la Convention de Londres relative à l'aide alimentaire.
8. Le Groupe de coordination pour les situations d'urgences, qui chapeaute les opérations d'urgence de l'Organisation, a ensuite été saisi des conclusions de l'atelier et a recommandé qu'elles soient également soumises à deux organes intergouvernementaux de la FAO: le Comité de la sécurité alimentaire mondiale et la Commission des ressources génétiques pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture.

Introduction

“Preparedness for, and effective and sustainable response to, food and agricultural emergencies” is one of the strategic objectives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In recent years, there has been an increasing incidence of emergency situations stemming from natural disasters, such as droughts and floods, as well as from civil wars and ethnic conflicts. This trend has been reflected within FAO, where the value of emergency and early rehabilitation programmes has increased progressively from US\$51 million in 1996–97 to US\$349 million in 2002–03.

Within the agriculture sector, seed is, of course, a farmer’s most essential input and the provision of seeds to strengthen the recovery of agricultural production systems following disaster situations has become an important activity of many agencies working in relief and rehabilitation. The basic rationale for a seed focus has been that, in emergency situations, affected farming and displaced households have lost their seed and, hence, their capacity for food production. By supplying good quality seed of appropriate varieties, they can resume and increase agricultural production, thereby reducing or eliminating dependence on food aid.

The experience of the last decade is challenging this conventional seed relief paradigm, within FAO and beyond. Farmer seed systems, the basis of seed security, are often much more resilient than was previously assumed. Experience has also revealed that many seed shortages are not short-term acute events but are recurrent chronic situations that require a more long-term approach, particularly in countries affected by periodic natural shocks and in post-conflict transition situations. Moreover, there is an increasing commitment to link relief with rehabilitation and development in order to contribute to food and livelihood security in a sustainable way.

Beyond food, seeds and planting material are recognized as the physical embodiment of plant genetic resources. The central importance of the seed sector in the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA) is reflected in the FAO Global Plan of Action (GPA). Within the GPA, specific recommendations relating to seed relief are contained in priority activities numbers 3 (“Assisting farmers in disaster situations to restore agricultural systems”) and 13 (“Supporting seed production and distribution”). With the entry into force of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (29 June 2004), implementation of the GPA, including these two priority activities, has acquired renewed impetus.

In 2002, FAO carried out an evaluation of its strategic objective A.3: “Preparedness for, and effective and sustainable response to, food and emergencies,” which was endorsed by the Organization’s governing body, the FAO Council. Among the primary recommendations related to seed relief, the report advised FAO:

- a) to give more attention to assessing the needs of vulnerable farmers, especially in disaster-prone regions. With respect to seeds and planting material, this would imply a greater understanding of the full range of seed systems farmers use;
- b) to consider a wider range of emergency response options, such as seed vouchers and fairs; and
- c) to make more use of evaluation in agricultural relief projects.

Also in 2002, FAO set up a new Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) in order to respond more effectively to its expanded emergency and rehabilitation portfolio. FAO has moved to increase the role of its technical divisions, including the Seed and Plant Genetic Resources Service (AGPS), in designing relief

interventions. TCE has been working with AGPS, the Agricultural Sector in Economic Development Service (ESAE) and other relevant services, particularly with a view to improving the assessment, evaluation and testing of approaches for more targeted and sustainable relief.

Within FAO, other specific activities are underway to strengthen seed system-related responses. The Organization is integrating seed system analysis into its emergency needs assessment guidelines and is simultaneously developing good practice guidance for seed distribution and support to local seed systems. Its seed-related emergency response has also evolved in two fundamental ways over the last five years: FAO has complemented its direct implementation role in emergencies with the role of coordination among partners (including non-governmental organizations [NGOs]), while also shifting its response emphasis from one of importing seed to encouraging local procurement of seed and planting materials for subsequent in-country distribution.

Developments outside FAO mutually reinforce such changes and several partner organizations have carried out a number of important seed relief-related activities in recent years. For example:

- The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in cooperation with others, have developed a seed security assessment framework that distinguishes between seed availability, access and quality and between chronic and acute seed insecurity. This draws on their own field experience and also builds on earlier work by various organizations including CIAT, CRS, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- CRS, in cooperation with others, including FAO, has developed and implemented seed vouchers and fairs as an alternative approach to seed system-based relief.
- The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and others have developed methodologies for seed needs assessment at the community level.

It was therefore considered an opportune time to convene a stakeholders' workshop on Effective and Sustainable Seed Relief Activities to bring together stakeholders working to improve the quality of emergency response. Held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 26 to 28 May 2003, the workshop included 70 participants from a wide range of organizations and countries, focusing on the African continent. Financial support was provided by the Governments of Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States of America, as well as from FAO's core budget.

In preparation for the workshop, an informal FAO Seed Discussion Group was formed, comprising relevant staff of various FAO units as well as a consultant expert from CIAT. Discussions in this group identified some critical issues impeding (or enhancing) current seed relief practice. Additionally, a background paper was prepared by CIAT and FAO to provide an overview and analysis of relevant issues. ICRISAT, CRS, FAO field staff and national staff of ministries of agriculture contributed case studies that were presented at the workshop. These papers are included in this report.

Issues raised in the various presentations were discussed in plenary and in working groups. Issues put forward related particularly to (i) needs assessment, (ii) choice of interventions and (iii) monitoring and evaluation, with the results of these discussions reflected in the "Discussion" section of this report. On the basis of the presentations and deliberations, draft conclusions, recommendations and a set of guiding principles for seed relief were prepared, discussed and adopted in a final plenary session. These main outputs are presented in the Executive summary. The agenda for the meeting and the list of participants are provided in Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

Overall, the workshop aimed to broaden understanding and raise awareness of the varied issues shaping emergency seed relief. It also sought to promote a shared

commitment towards advancing more precise response approaches, grounded in a common set of principles for better practice. The conclusions and recommendations herein are made available to encourage stakeholders to take the next vital steps to improve further the effectiveness and sustainability of seed relief.