I. Background information

WFP and ILO work together in various projects and programmes, in which food is used as an incentive for work (called food for work (FFW) programmes). These projects and programmes use labour intensive methods to construct or rehabilitate infrastructure. For WFP, this approach combines two major objectives:

1. to provide a safety net for poor, food-insecure households. Members of these households can work with FFW in labour-based construction activities and benefit directly from the food given out
2. to improve the living conditions of poor communities, by creating or improving infrastructure that is of direct benefit to them (community roads, drains, drinking water points etc.).

The current guidelines agreed between ILO and WFP state that FFW can only be used to improve or create assets that are of direct benefit to the community (for example community infrastructure); or to provide emergency relief during drought or economic stress (see Annex 1 for more detailed guidelines). Food as a supplement to a cash payment is also acceptable on public works, on condition that at least 50% of the total payment is made in cash.

Although FFW should basically be seen as short term emergency relief for the poorest households, WFP has recently increased its emphasis on the long-term development aspects of their programme activities. Community infrastructure works especially have a long term development objective, which poses new questions as to the validity of using food as payment.

Some of the problems encountered in the various FFW programmes are:

Problems related to food

- The distribution of food as an incentive to work can distort the operation and economics of local agricultural markets. However, if WFP purchases most of the food from national or regional markets, this distortion can be reduced
- The transportation and distribution of food can create logistical problems, especially in remote rural areas.

However, these problems are not directly related to ILO’s competence and will therefore not be further discussed.
Problems related to labour

- FFW can interfere with existing self-help initiatives. In externally-initiated self-help programmes, communities provide their labour free, while the government and/or donor agency typically provides materials, equipment and technical advice. Self-help schemes and FFW initiatives can therefore interfere with each other since both are aimed at producing a community asset. This may create conflicts, since people used to FFW initiatives will expect payment in food for their labour, while they are not paid at all for their labour on self-help schemes. During a recent study in Zambia, some donors even commented that they would not work in areas which had been the recipient of FFW interventions, as communities that have been involved in FFW are not then easily motivated to work on self-help schemes.

- Conflicts can arise with adjacent paid activities. According to the guidelines between WFP and ILO, FFW should only be used in situations where the improved assets are of direct benefit to the community. However, it is sometimes difficult to define this benefit, and in cases of doubt payment in food may be seen as unfair, especially if the same work is done for wage payment as well. A problem can also arise when the value of the ‘food basket’ is considerably higher than the prevalent wage rate for unskilled labour or the prevalent agricultural wage. In those cases, labour can migrate from the paid labour schemes to the FFW activities.

- People can become reliant on work created by (temporary) FFW programmes. Therefore WFP often proposes a rotation schedule so that each group of workers only participates during a short period. FFW programmes, by their very nature, should always have a temporary character.

- The policy of FFW to target specific groups could lead to discrimination against certain categories of workers. As FFW is basically meant as a safety net for the poorest households, their members will be targeted. An advantage of this approach is that people with limited employment opportunities are selected (such as elderly people, women and youths). On the other hand the actual selection of workers could discriminate against other able-bodied unemployed workers.

- Labour productivity on FFW programmes may be low, since the prime objective of the programmes is to create employment for disadvantaged groups. The number of workers may vary per day, and the selected workers may not be the most productive. As food is provided free there is a risk that work continues just for the sake of receiving food.

1 It should be noted that workers on FFW schemes only work 4 hours per day.
Problems related to improved assets

- WFP, governments and NGOs normally do not have the technical capacity to properly supervise labour-based infrastructure works, which may jeopardise the quality of the construction. WFP has to agree with other donors on cost sharing arrangements to ensure technical assistance and training. Close monitoring is also necessary to ensure the relevance of the construction works to community needs.

- Arrangements related to the quality of the construction, the relevance of the assets for the community, labour productivity, and maintenance arrangements may not always receive the necessary attention, since the prime objective of WFP is to provide food. This is especially valid for emergency relief, where programmes have to start on short notice.

- Maintenance of improved assets may be a problem for FFW programmes, since community members who received food incentives during the construction period are normally also expecting food incentives for maintenance activities. In general it is not advisable to include recurrent community activities under a FFW programme, as it is not sustainable (the FFW programme being only a temporary activity). Therefore, sustainable maintenance arrangements have to be defined at an early stage of the FFW programme. Another problem related to maintenance is that people involved in construction activities under FFW comprise the poorest people within the community. Maintenance, however, should not be the responsibility of only the poorest members of the community.

Although the above comments indicate that there are many problems related to FFW activities, it should be stressed that the implementation of FFW schemes can have great advantages for both governments and communities. People with limited employment opportunities can be employed and trained in infrastructure works. Infrastructure can be improved which otherwise would not receive attention, due to lack of resources from the government and communities.

II. Objective and scope of the study

This study aims at providing guidelines for FFW programmes, which should ameliorate the potential problems mentioned above. The guidelines should indicate:

- the selection criteria for activities suitable for FFW
- the relationship between FFW and self help initiatives
- the working conditions and size of ‘food basket’ in relation to household need and prevalent wages
- the mechanisms for quality control, cost control and monitoring of construction
- maintenance arrangements for assets created under FFW.

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2 It should be noted that most infrastructure works, including works carried out by paid labour, face problems with maintenance. FFW activities are often related to community infrastructure for which the government takes little or no responsibility. The community should thus be involved in maintenance.
The study shall build upon the present ILO guidelines. More specifically the following issues should be included:

**Selection criteria**

1. Community infrastructure works constructed under FFW should have direct benefits for the communities from which the workers are selected. How should this direct benefit be defined? For example: roads, paths, and tracks which provide a direct access within a specific community are likely to be of direct benefit to a community, but what about feeder roads connecting various villages?

2. The ILO guidelines mention that FFW can be carried out in emergencies. How should emergencies be defined?

3. When is food as a supplement to cash wages acceptable on public infrastructure programmes? Who shall work on these combined food/cash schemes?

4. How should the workers on FFW schemes (the direct beneficiaries) and the geographic location for FFW interventions be selected?

5. Through what process or method can the capacity of a community for self-help and FFW be measured? The capacity is limited by other commitments/work related to household tasks, agriculture, enterprise, and other/previous self-help commitments.

**Relation between FFW and self help**

1. How can interference between community infrastructure works of self help initiatives and FFW programmes and be avoided (the latter have more or less the same target group and activities as self help initiatives)?

2. What is the ILO’s position on self-help activities? Some issues to consider are:

   - should households within poor communities be asked to provide cash and labour for free at all? When is “free labour” unacceptable? Is it when only a certain percentage of all the beneficiaries are involved?
   - how should self-help be organised: by collection of local cash contributions with which to pay local workers, or by providing unpaid labour?
   - how can a community manage the funds which they have collected?
   - will the work site organisation of unpaid labourers be very cumbersome and lead to higher overhead costs? What is the size of the overhead costs under self-help systems, compared to the size under FFW and paid labour?
   - what is the definition of minor works, for which self-help is most suitable?

3. Do participants in FFW see the food as an incentive for self-help or as a wage?

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3 More and more government and donor programmes are using a self help approach for community activities.
Size of ‘food basket’ and labour conditions

1. How should the size of the ‘food basket’ relate to the prevailing unskilled labour wages, agricultural wages and household food needs?

2. How can FFW initiatives be safeguarded against unfair recruitment methods and forced labour? Should rotation of workers be introduced in any FFW programme?

3. How can workers best get health insurance during work?

Quality control, cost control and monitoring

1. How can WFP control and monitor the quality of labour-based construction, considering that they, as well as most governments and NGOs, lack sufficient technical knowledge and skills?

2. How can sustainable construction of infrastructure in emergency relief be organised, considering the short time span in which activities should normally commence?

3. How can labour productivity be increased, while at the same time the provision of food remains the main objective?

Maintenance arrangements

1. Who will own the created or improved assets? How to involve government and communities in the activities and what kind of agreements should be made before starting the activities?

2. How to approach recurrent activities related to community infrastructure, such as maintenance and waste management? In general, it does not seem sustainable to include recurrent activities on community infrastructure in FFW programmes (maintenance at critical points, such as river crossings in community access roads, could be an exception).

3. Who will own the equipment and tools after completion of a FFW project; the government, an NGO, or the community?

III. Implementation of the study

The study shall be carried out as a desk study by one consultant. The consultant shall be conversant with FFW and employment intensive and community based works. The consultant shall focus on experiences and lessons learned in Africa. The study shall take 25 days. The consultant shall have access to all relevant data from WFP and ILO and is expected to have a briefing meeting with WFP Rome and ILO Geneva.

At least three case studies (for example two on rural and one on urban FFW) should be worked out in detail, illustrating the various aspects of FFW.

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4At a later stage the guidelines could be adapted for Asia.
IV. Outputs

A study report indicating clear guidelines on food for work activities in rural and urban areas (5 typed copies) submitted to ILO. A copy of the report on PC 3.5in diskette in Microsoft Word and WordPerfect format is also required.

V. Time schedule

The study shall preferably take place in the second half of 1997 and the final report should be submitted to ILO before the end of 1997 (exact dates will be indicated in the External Collaboration Contract). After approval, the ILO shall submit the document to WFP for comment.

VI. Draft budget

One consultant for 25 days @ USD 400 per day USD 10,000
Travel and DSA (briefing Geneva and Rome, costs depending on home/duty station of consultant) USD 2,000

Total USD 12,000