

# UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME



# UNDP

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## COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

### CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF GLOBAL AND INTERREGIONAL PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

#### Project recommendation of the Administrator

#### Assistance for a global project

#### Research on Food Systems and Policies (GLO/80/006)

Estimated UNDP contribution:           \$US 2,500,000  
Duration:                                    Three years  
Executing Agency:                         UNDP

#### I. Background

1. Hunger, malnutrition and illness, with their consequent impact upon human, social and physical development, exact a huge toll from many developing societies. Although authoritative assessments vary, there is broad agreement that several hundred million people in the world are malnourished and that 20 million or more children die every year from starvation and related diseases. Although the burden of world hunger knows no national or racial boundaries, in the main it falls upon the urban and rural poor, who must live with the debilitating consequences of an inadequate food supply.

2. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) was established by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) in 1980. The main task of IFPRI is to provide an objective analysis of world food problems and to determine those actions and policies that could be adopted by Governments

and regional and international agencies to effect a continued increase in the quantity and quality of food supplies available to all people through enhanced food production, wider trade opportunities, and improved efficiency and equity in food distribution.

3. IFPRI has been working, since its inception, on the analysis of Government policies and programmes related to food consumption by low-income groups. Analysis of public food distribution and pricing policies have been undertaken in Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh. Related research is under way for food-for-work schemes in Bangladesh, and a comprehensive analysis of the Egyptian food price subsidies is currently being initiated. The main goal of this work is to contribute knowledge useful in the formulation of policy regarding the application of public resources to influence food prices and food availability by: (a) adding to current knowledge about the effects of food price and food rationing policies, and specific elements of such policies on equity and growth factors; (b) improving the understanding of the linkages and relationships determining these effects; and (c) improving the empirical and methodological basis for evaluating existing policies and predicting the effects of new policies or changes in current ones. These studies form part of the series of studies whose overall aim is to develop a common body of knowledge and methodological approaches. In addition to its research in food consumption and distribution policies, IFPRI is studying historical trends in production, utilization and trade of food over the period 1961-1967, and projecting these trends to the year 2000 on specified assumptions of demands, as a means of indicating future food gaps for surpluses. This analysis provides an essential framework for the more detailed study of the structure of food systems and the interrelationships among countries.

4. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) was established in 1964 on the basis of a special contribution made by the Government of the Netherlands. Since 1968, UNRISD is being financed from voluntary contributions. It undertakes research into the interrelationships of social and economic factors in development and methods of social planning. Included in these activities is the study of food systems and food security in the world. In the early 1970s, UNRISD completed a comprehensive analysis of the role of co-operatives in agricultural development. UNRISD also launched a series of studies on the "green revolution", which resulted in the publication of 17 national research reports, and an overview, published by the Oxford University Press, entitled Seeds of Plenty, Seeds of Want (A. Pearse). These programmes have the twin objectives of understanding more clearly why food security is becoming an increasingly critical problem for many developing countries and suggesting what can be done to improve food security for low-income groups within these countries.

5. The United Nations University (UNU) was established in 1972 as an international university under the auspices of the United Nations. The UNU is a system of academic institutions, rather than an intergovernmental organization, comprising a programming and co-ordinating central organ and

a decentralized system of affiliated institutions integrated into the world university community, and devoted to action-oriented research into the global problems of human survival, development, and welfare and to post-graduate training of young scholars and research workers. Capital and recurrent costs are met from voluntary contributions from Governments, foundations, universities and individuals. The priority areas of UNU's activities are: world hunger, human and social development and the use and management of natural resources. Since its inception in 1975, UNU has made the nutrition and health implications of food policy one of the priority areas of its World Hunger Programme. In 1981, this priority area was expanded to deal with problems in the broader context of hunger and poverty; and, in 1982, this focus was continued as the Hunger, Health and Society Project. Its objectives are to "uncover the relationships between hunger and health within societies in relationships to their specific economy, technology, ideology and politics".

6. IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU have formulated a joint project proposal which represents a concerted attempt by all three organizations to alleviate world hunger by studying selected food production, consumption and nutrition problems in a broad range of developing countries. It is expected that such studies will contribute significantly to the design and implementation of suitable international and national policies for mitigating the world food problem.

## II. The project

7. The main objectives of the joint IFPRI/UNRISD/UNU research project are to:

(a) Provide information to policy makers and planners about the mechanisms and interrelationships governing food supply dynamics at the international, national and local level;

(b) Identify existing internal and external constraints on the achievement of adequate food security for selected countries and for disadvantaged groups within those countries;

(c) Pinpoint changes in policies and institutions required to overcome these constraints;

(d) Analyze the effect of particular socio-economic processes and structures upon food production and consumption at the national and local level;

(e) Evaluate the impact of specific national programmes and policies upon the food supply, health and nutrition status of different population groups; and

(f) Advise and train policymakers regarding the most efficient use of public resources to influence food prices and food availability to lower income groups.

8. IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU have their own ongoing research programmes, networks of collaborating institutions and governing bodies. They also have separate accounting and administrative structures. For these reasons, the three organizations have divided the proposed research into three inter-related categories. The first category, which is the responsibility of IFPRI, includes the analysis of food production consumption trends and market intervention policies (such as food subsidies) in selected developing countries. The second category of the project is the responsibility of UNRISD. In this part, UNRISD will examine the impact of various socio-economic processes and policy programmes upon food security in a number of developing countries. In the third category, UNU will analyze the impact of selected food supply and production policies on the health and nutrition of low-income groups in several developing countries.

9. The tripartite nature of the proposed research is designed to make maximum use of the varied resources and skills of IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU. In general, IFPRI focuses on the economic aspects of the food issue at the international and national level, UNRISD concentrates on socio-political aspects of the food supply at the national and local level, and UNU deals with the health and nutrition implications of food policy. The proposed collaborative arrangement between the three organizations would be advantageous not only to the organizations themselves, but also to the countries they serve. In fact, while each organization is capable of studying the world food problem and offering advice individually, integrated and informed advice to policymakers from all three organizations would be much more comprehensive and rewarding. The UNDP project, therefore, represents the combined effort of IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU to qualitatively expand their operating efficiency and resource capacity for enunciating useful policy recommendations on food issues to decision-makers.

10. Specific project activities of the three institutions are as follows:

IFPRI

(a) The extension of IFPRI work in food trends analysis to include detailed studies in two key developing countries: Nigeria and Brazil;

(b) The study of consumer-oriented food subsidy programmes in five developing countries: Philippines, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Pakistan, and Colombia, and the dissemination of recent research findings on food subsidy programmes at an international conference; and

(c) The convening of an international regional conference on food policy issues on Sub-Saharan Africa.

11. The need for research and output activities in these three areas is manifest. For example, knowledge regarding the dynamics and impact of consumer-oriented food subsidy programmes in developing countries is limited. The magnitude of the fiscal costs of these programmes, the mode of their implementation and what nutritional impact they have upon targeted

social groups, need to be determined. Empirical knowledge regarding recent trends in these subsidy programmes and how they are influenced by internal and external factors (such as shortage of foreign exchange) is also inadequate. The proposed IFPRI research would provide much needed information about the trends and impact of food subsidy programmes, leading to a comprehensive statement on food subsidy policy.

12. There is, at the same time, a need to promote the international exchange of research and information regarding food subsidy and other food policy issues. Recognizing this need, IFPRI proposes the convening of two international conferences, one on food subsidy programmes and the other on food security issues in Sub-Saharan Africa. These conferences will summarize the state of existing research, draw conclusions for action and promote the active exchange of ideas between researchers, policymakers and planners. IFPRI hopes that these conferences will stimulate the type of cross-cultural information flows so necessary for the design and implementation of better policies for achieving food security.

#### UNRISD

(a) UNRISD outlines plans to undertake national, regional and local studies of the food situation in nine developing countries - India, Nepal, China, Mexico, Nicaragua, Chile, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta and Senegal. In several of these countries, UNRISD has already undertaken initial exploratory research upon which to build. Each of the proposed UNRISD studies in these countries will include the following components:

- (i) Diagnosis of the country's food security problems and food chain cycle (food flows from point of origin to final consumption);
- (ii) Analysis of the principal socio-economic processes - such as migration, organization, technological change and industrialization - affecting food production, distribution, consumption and nutrition;
- (iii) Study of the main Government food policies and programmes, with particular emphasis on the impact of such policies upon poorer economic groups; and
- (iv) Identification of practical policy alternatives for improving food security at the national and local level.

13. The proposed field studies of UNRISD promise to fill an important research lacuna. In the past, the food problem has all too often been treated either as a technical problem capable of solution through technical means or as a demographic problem that must be solved through population control. As a result, broader social, ecological, political and institutional factors affect and constrain food production and distribution. For instance, the effect of the recent expansion of the petroleum industry in southeastern Mexico on regional

food production and food access by lower income groups needs to be assessed. A study on how the recent Chinese decision to limit family size affected food production and availability at the local level will be helpful. In order to undertake these and similar tasks, UNRISD proposes the fielding of a multi-disciplinary team of researchers - anthropologists, economists, geographers, nutritionists and others - in each country. The overriding aim here is not the compilation of esoteric, country-specific knowledge, but an integrated, cross-cultural understanding of how social and economic processes affect the dynamics of a country's food chain. An improved knowledge of these processes will allow policymakers and planners to identify solutions to the food problem that are appropriate to different and varying circumstances.

UNU

(a) UNU plans to commission the writing of original papers on the health and nutrition impact of food security policies in six developing countries. Each of these papers will provide policymakers with the following products:

- (i) A theoretical basis on which to understand the relationship between specific food and agricultural policies and their impact on the health and nutrition status of low-income groups;
- (ii) A set of indicators which can be used to predict, a priori the impact of alternative production and supply policies on nutrition and health; and
- (iii) A set of criteria which may be employed in ex poste evaluation of the effectiveness of food security initiatives.

14. The active exchange of research activities and results between IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU, through the UNDP project, promises to greatly extend the utility and the character of their joint policy recommendations to decision-makers. For example, UNU and IFPRI work on the health and economic impact of specific food programmes may suggest important reasons to extend the scope of a particular food subsidy programme. Similarly, the study by IFPRI and UNRISD on the impact that technological change and institutional dynamics have upon food supply and distribution may contribute significantly to the design of more effective consumer-oriented food security programmes.

15. During the course of the project, IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU plan to publish a series of monographs and research reports. These studies will be followed by more general overview reports which draw cross-cultural conclusions from the different national and local level studies. Upon termination of the project, IFPRI and UNRISD will also file a final report summarizing major findings and suggestions.

16. The research proposal envisions close contact between IFPRI, UNRISD and UNU research teams throughout the duration of the project. Such contact will extend well beyond the parameters of the individual research projects carried out by each organization. For example, the concerns of the IFPRI-sponsored Sub-Saharan Africa Food Policy Conference are closely related to that of UNRISD's research on food systems in Africa. It is therefore proposed that the IFPRI conference, which will focus on policy issues, be conducted coterminously with an UNRISD food systems seminar. In this way, several of the participants could attend both meetings, allowing for a considerable savings in travel costs. Researchers from the two organizations would benefit from the Food Policy Conference discussions, and it would help them to focus their research questions more sharply on key food issues.

17. As the lead institution, IFPRI will maintain close contact with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on relevant aspects of specific activities to be implemented by IFPRI/UNRISD/UNU. FAO and UNDP will make concerted efforts towards establishing linkages between activities conducted under this project proposal and programmes at country and inter-country levels, whenever deemed appropriate. FAO and UNDP will also participate in a small advisory committee for the project which will meet midway during the project and towards its termination. A representative of FAO will be invited to participate in specific conferences and workshops of the project which may be of special interest.

18. The various programmes described above, for which full descriptions (including the anticipated participating countries) will be made available to UNDP on project approval, will be implemented by IFPRI, in collaboration with UNRISD, UNU and national institutions of developing countries. Special conferences, seminars and workshops will be arranged as needs arise. Participants in those events will be carefully selected by the institutions concerned. While IFPRI will act as the lead institution for the project, the thrust of the project's activities will be focused in relation to the different strategies and existing programmes of UNRISD and UNU.

19. The Administrator intends (through contractual arrangements between IFPRI and UNDP to entrust the implementation of this project to IFPRI. As in the past, UNDP will follow closely all the developments in this global project and, together with FAO, will participate in the project advisory committee referred to in paragraph 17. This committee will appraise the ongoing collaborative programmes and advise on its future direction. Towards the end of the project, UNDP will, in consultation with IFPRI, undertake, under UNDP direct costs, a review of the accomplishments of the project to be carried out by a team of independent consultants. This review will take place in conjunction with the second meeting of the advisory committee towards the end of the project.

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20. The expenditure components of the proposed UNDP assistance is:

	<u>US\$</u>
Subcontract	2 364 000
UNDP direct costs	<u>136 000</u>
Total	<u>2 500 000</u>

The proposed UNDP contribution will be contained within the Global IPF established by the Governing Council for the current cycle.

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