

Food Aid Fraud

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Consignments of aid are ending up in the hands of traders.

Truckloads of biscuits donated by India for the children of Afghanistan are being openly sold on the streets of Jalalabad, leading to accusations of corruption among local teachers and NGOs.

Puonani Forbes, regional director of the World Food Programme, WFP, in Jalalabad, said 9,500 tonnes of biscuits had been distributed among 150,000 schoolchildren, allowing for 100 grammes per child, per day. But it appears that many boxes of the consignment have gone astray.

“We have distributed these biscuits through [local Afghan] NGOs, that’s why [they] were not properly distributed,” she said. “When we discovered the fraud and theft of the NGOs, we immediately stopped assigning the projects.”

She refused to name which local agencies were involved in the distribution.

The reselling is the latest example of a widespread problem: donor food making its way on to the shelves of local grocery stores and bazaars and then sold for a handsome profit.

Zabihullah and Najibullah, two shopkeepers in the Dand Ghara area of the city, said they buy boxes of biscuits for 400 afghanis and re-sell them for one hundred more.

“The people who sell [them] to us say that the teachers and the workers of the NGOs are selling them,” they said. “It’s is very surprising to look at the carton and read ‘this is the donation of India through the World Food Programme for the people of Afghanistan’.”

Safoora Malikzai, principal of Bibi Hawa high school, said while her school had not received any such donation, she had heard biscuits were being handed out in neighbouring districts and in the villages.

Abdul Ghani Hidayat, regional education director of Nangrahar province, said his department had not been consulted about the distribution.

“We can’t do anything about selling in open bazaars. If the World Food Programme had consulted us in this regard, the biscuits would not have found their way to the bazaars,” he said.

Forbes said the reason why the WFP had not consulted the education department was due to “their lack of staff and transportation facilities”.

But, she added, “In future, we will ensure the education department is with us throughout the process.”

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