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Endline Evaluation of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Grant Food for Education (FFE) Programme for WFP Cambodia 2013-2016

BACKGROUND

The endline evaluation of the Food for Education (FFE) programme (FFE-442-2013/035-00) (2013-2016) of the World Food Programme in Cambodia which has been supported by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) McGovern-Dole Program Grant. The programme operates under two strategic objectives: to improve literacy of school aged children, and to improve the use of health and dietary practices. The Theory of Change is that by providing a conducive school environment, reducing hunger and preventing illness, students will be able to participate more fully in class, resulting in better learning outcomes. With this in mind, for the 2013-2016 phase, USDA provided WFP with a US\$20 million grant to implement a range of activities in schools. The programme provides a daily breakfast, hereafter referred to as the school meals programme, and take-home rations to poor students with good school attendance, in three provinces in Cambodia. Food commodities are provided by USDA as in-kind contributions. The programme targets 166,928 primary school students for school meals and 12,221 students in Grades 4-6 receiving take home rations. The provision of rations prioritizes girls, especially in areas where gender gaps in education exist. This work has been commissioned by the WFP Cambodia Country Office.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the evaluation were for accountability and learning. The evaluation has assessed whether the project achieved the intended results and assessed the project's effectiveness/efficiency of design, implementation and management. The main goal of the evaluation was to delineate the progress made over the past project period and

the likely improvements needed to ensure a smooth transition to Government ownership in the coming years.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation took place between June and December 2017. The evaluation followed a quasi-experimental approach employing a case-control methodology as per the 2014 baseline methodology. The evaluation used mixed data collection methods, including quantitative and qualitative survey techniques, and triangulated information from different methods and sources to enhance the reliability of findings. Participatory methods, including focus group discussions and key informant interviews were used where relevant to highlight lessons learned. The qualitative data collection generated primary data that have been used to triangulate the quantitative survey data. In total, the quantitative survey covered a sample of 118 of the total 861 USDA supported schools, as well as 25 comparison schools. The evaluation team also interviewed 203 people as key informants during the field mission, including 81 women and 121 men, covering a range of programme stakeholders including USDA representatives in Ho Chi Minh City, WFP personnel at WFP's Regional Bureau in Bangkok and the country office, as well as Government representatives, staff of United Nations agencies, partners' staff, school personnel and parents and children.

LIMITATIONS

The baseline 'comparison group' was later found to include school with some interventions by other agencies, meaning that the group was neither representative nor clean. Nevertheless, the same comparison group was utilized again for the midline, and now the endline survey.



1st March 2018

Overall, the evaluation found that School Meal Programme (EMP) + Take Home Ration (THR) schools have received more support, and therefore performed better on multiple indicators. It is noteworthy that USDA support has resulted in a parallel system of support to schools in the three targeted provinces. Schools supported by USDA have received multiple interventions over a long period of time, while oth-

er schools are behind. It will therefore be of key importance for WFP and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to take note of the activities that have been particularly effective and scale up these activities. This should include literacy related activities, training for parents and community sensitization, infrastructure development and the provision of a school meal.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation finds the FFE programme to be relevant to the Cambodian context, and efficiently implemented. The FFE programme has enabled WFP to implement multiple capacity building activities and provide support to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, including funding research into other school feeding modalities. The evaluation found that the WFP system of delivering food to schools was efficient. WFP provided high quality food commodities with no complaints, and minimal loss of food during transportation. The programme has contributed to gender equality and improving the school environment. The construction and rehabilitation of separate latrines for girls and boys has contributed to a more conducive school environment, and is likely to result in more regular attendance for girls, although there is no monitoring data available on this. The take-home rations have been provided to both boys or girls based on poverty criteria, with girls being prioritized in locations with gender inequality in schooling. Over half the take-home ration beneficiaries were girls (56 percent), although data indicates higher drop-out rates in boys. Overall, the evaluation found that school meals and take-home rations schools have received more support, and therefore performed better on multiple programme indicators. USDA support has resulted in a parallel system of assistance to schools in the three targeted provinces. Schools supported by USDA have received multiple interventions over a long period of time, while other schools are behind. It will therefore be of key importance for WFP and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to take note of the activities that have been particularly effective, and scale up these activities. This should include literacy related activities, training for parents and community sensitization, infrastructure development and the provision of a school meal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Continue implementation of the USDA McGovern Dole Program as per the current agreement (2016).

Recommendation 2: In recognition that ongoing Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports research findings are imminent on the cost effectiveness of the cash scholarship model, and the Government's capacity to implement a home-grown school feeding model of school feeding, the evaluation team recommends that WFP and the Government counterparts review the research findings as priority. This review should result in decisions that will guide the short/medium term development of a national school feeding approach.

Recommendation 3: Based on the research findings and decisions made above, the Roadmap should be reviewed. This should focus on identifying the priority actions required to coordinate and oversee implementation of a nationally owned school feeding programme (including budget).

Recommendation 4: Recognizing that most WFP personnel have skills in programme implementation but not in governance and capacity building per se, the evaluation recommends steps be taken to strengthen the capacity of the WFP Country Office in this regard.

Recommendation 5: The Government planning and budgeting processes for 2018 have already been finalized, so no additional Government contributions to school feeding are likely to be made before 2019. The evaluation team therefore recommends that for the next phase of planning the WFP Country Office works closely with Government counterparts at central and local levels to ensure that school feeding is appropriately reflected the next Government budget cycle.

Recommendation 6: The WFP Country Office and implementing partners should aim to have a minimum package of infrastructure facilities including kitchens, energy efficient stoves, store rooms, handwashing facilities and separate latrines for girls and boys in all USDA supported schools with the school meals programme. This should help ensure that schools would be able to function efficiently under a national school feeding programme.

Recommendation 7: The ET recommends that the WFP Country Office considers opportunities to undertake additional pieces of research:

Effectiveness of USDA support: The evaluation team recommends that the Regional Bureau, with support from Country Offices and Headquarters as appropriate, undertakes a meta-analysis of the successes and weaknesses of the USDA McGovern-Dole Program approach to school feeding.

Increasing micronutrient content of the school meal: the evaluation team recommends that WFP Country Office conducts research on alternative, cost-effective strategies to provide a nutrient rich school meal. These strategies can then be considered by the Government in addition to the ongoing work to promote local fortification in Cambodia.

The Evaluation is available: <https://www.wfp.org/content/cambodia-united-states-department-agriculture-usda-mcgovern-dole-grant-food-education-ffe-pr>

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