

# Evaluation Brief

WFP Office of Evaluation: *Measuring Results, Sharing Lessons*



## Somalia: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2012-2017)

### Context

Somalia is a low-income country with population of 12.3 million, including 1.1 million Internally Displaced People.<sup>1</sup> Through three decades of civil war, the country has maintained an informal economy based on livestock, remittances, money transfers from abroad, and telecommunications.<sup>2</sup> Malnutrition is a serious problem reflecting a national stunting rate of 26%.<sup>3</sup> Only 30 % of children are enrolled in school and just 40% of these girls.<sup>4</sup> Somalia ranks as one of the lowest performing countries globally for gender equality.<sup>5</sup> The civil war has brought challenges regarding protection and humanitarian access. A combination of four consecutive seasons of poor rainfall in 2016 and 2017, conflict-related population displacements and trade disruption led to a deterioration in food security, leaving 3.4 million people – 26% of the population – in crisis or emergency levels.

### WFP Country Strategy and Portfolio in Somalia

WFP's support for Somalia started in 1967. From 2012 to 2017, WFP's portfolio in Somalia consisted of one relief operation, two recovery and development-oriented operations and nine special operations which supported the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, the rehabilitation of transport infrastructure, and cluster initiatives. While assisting 3.5 million people, the total required funding was approximately US\$ two billion of which just US\$ one billion – or 50 percent was received. There was no WFP country strategy document covering the evaluation period.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The CPE covered the period 2012–2017. Focusing on the portfolio as a whole, the evaluation assessed: i) alignment and strategic positioning of WFP's portfolio in Somalia; ii) factors influencing and quality of strategic decision-making; and iii) portfolio performance and results. It was timed to provide evidence to inform the design of WFP's new interim country strategic plan and ongoing WFP programming in Somalia.

### Key Findings

#### Alignment and Strategic Positioning

WFP was strategically and appropriately placed to support relief and recovery-oriented initiatives addressing food security in Somalia. Since 2012, WFP addressed the shift from food aid to food assistance by enhancing nutrition, relief activities, livelihoods and social safety nets through the provision of school meals. Working as part of the Scaling Up Nutrition network, WFP was particularly well-aligned to provide structured support for the design and implementation of national nutrition policies and programmes. The portfolio was broadly relevant to beneficiaries needs. However, there was limited evidence of the differentiation of programming by age, gender, and diversity, beyond the traditional efforts in nutrition and education interventions. There was also inadequate strategic attention to the long-term post-emergency needs of internally displaced persons in urban areas.

Over time, WFP country office improved its relationships with other United Nations agencies, particularly through establishing close

partnerships with UNICEF and FAO and, by engaging in the development of a useful conceptual framework for coordinating the delivery of safety nets, basic services and livelihoods. It also adopted an innovative approach by formalizing strategic partnerships with three non-governmental organizations. However, operationalization of this framework was limited. Broadly, significant fault lines continued between humanitarian and development agencies in resilience programming; and differences were evident in the strategic positions adopted by individual donors.

With WFP's support, the cluster system provided an important platform for operational coordination although it was less effective as a strategic coordination platform. WFP has positioned itself to lead responses to acute food and nutrition emergencies. This role was aligned with WFP's comparative advantages including its widespread field presence; extensive network of cooperating partners facilitating community engagement and the implementation of operations; strong analytical capacities; and unique expertise and capacity in supply chain management. However, WFP had a less pre-eminent role in supporting recovery and building of resilience.

#### Quality of Strategic Decision-Making

WFP's difficult experiences before and during the famine of 2011 influenced the decision to invest heavily in preparedness measures with a view to averting future famines. WFP's decision-making took into appropriate consideration the food security situation, WFP's mandate and policies, national policy frameworks, donor conditionalities, and the changing governance context.

A variety of risk management and mitigation measures were adopted, including a strict policy of carrying out physical monitoring of operations and the establishment of an effective, easily accessible and robust complaint and feedback mechanism. However, enhanced application of policies for safeguarding beneficiary data and protection was needed to minimize risks.

#### Portfolio Performance and Results

##### Effectiveness

Geographical targeting of WFP's assistance was clearly linked to the findings of vulnerability and food security assessments and seasonal analysis response plans. There were concerns regarding the community-based targeting of households because social exclusion and marginalization have affected the distribution and redistribution of entitlements in Somalia. The country office adhered to WFP's Humanitarian Protection Policy and humanitarian principles. Despite WFP's well-defined data protection and privacy policies, doubts remain about the application of these policies when handling sensitive data.

WFP's assistance effectively responded to the life-saving and recovery needs of 3.5 million beneficiaries. However, as of late 2017, security concerns continued to prevent WFP from reaching 600,000 people classified as extremely food-insecure.

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA, Population Estimation Survey in Somalia, October 2014.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>

<sup>3</sup> FSNAU, Technical Series Report No. VII 70<sup>SEP</sup>, December 2016.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/somalia/education\\_56.html](https://www.unicef.org/somalia/education_56.html)

<sup>5</sup> OECD 2014. Social Institution and Gender Index.

**General Food Assistance:** Planned output targets for general food assistance were generally exceeded; and 55 percent of WFP food assistance reached women. While initially slow to employ the use of cash-based transfers increased dramatically from 2016 onwards.

**Nutrition:** Targets for targeted supplementary feeding were exceeded in 2012, 2016 and 2017 but fell short in other years because of changing needs and access constraints. Blanket supplementary feeding was either close to or slightly exceeded targets. The numbers of social and behaviour change communication beneficiaries and of mother-and-child health and nutrition centres assisted fluctuated but came close to targets in most years. Support to the recipients of anti-retroviral therapy reached targets only in 2012 and then progressively declined because of funding constraints. Nutrition outcomes met targets for coverage, recovery, default and mortality rates.

**School Feeding** exceeded planned target beneficiary numbers in all years except 2014 and 2017, when there were resource constraints. There was little evidence of positive effects of school meals on food security, but retention of girls and boys and overall attendance and education outcomes did improve. The suspension of take-home rations in 2017 did not have a significant effect on girls’ attendance and retention.

**Food for assets (FFA):** Numbers of beneficiaries exceeded the targets in 2012 and 2013, remained close to the target in 2015–2016 and dropped significantly in 2017 as donors earmarked their contributions for emergency activities. WFP’s ability to create or rehabilitate the planned livelihood assets was variable. Recovery activities did not achieve targets for improvements in food security outcomes. **Food for training (FFT) activities** were concentrated in urban areas on skills for employment and small business development.

**Gender** inequalities have been a significant concern in Somalia. However, gender analysis in programming was limited. Staff capacity in, and responsibility for, addressing gender issues were also inadequate and a lag was apparent in the operationalization of the most recent WFP gender policy.

**Capacity development** –WFP has contributed- modestly but appropriately - to capacity building of national institutions in food security and analysis. The capacity for rapid response was enhanced by the strategic shift to cash.

### Efficiency

The country office sought to control costs by reducing delays and demurrage costs through investments in port infrastructure and handling capacities; regional cost sharing agreements for using the Berbera logistics hub; the consolidation of its nutrition activities around mother-and-child health and nutrition centres; and the establishment of a single registry to reduce overlaps in targeting. WFP’s choice of modality relied heavily on qualitative considerations. Although analyses for most planned distributions indicated greater cost efficiency for in-kind food assistance, consideration of timeliness and the importance of meeting beneficiary preferences have increasingly led to a preference for cash. The use of the Rome-based Global Commodity Management Facility has reduced delivery lead times by 62 percent. Mass registration of beneficiaries, the distribution of SCOPE cards, and the equipping of retailers with point-of-sale devices, started in 2015, facilitated the rapid response to the 2017 crisis. However, the extent of partners’ knowledge and understanding of WFP policies regarding beneficiary identities and information was unclear.

### Sustainability

Work on integrating WFP services with those of UNICEF, and consolidating them in national mother-and-child health and nutrition centres and programmes, coupled with capacity building ministries of health, enabled a more sustainable approach to nutrition services. With the handover of the management of ports to private sector operators, improvements in port infrastructure are likely to be sustained. There is little evidence on WFP contribution to rebuilding post-disaster livelihoods through sustained benefits from the assets created and increased employment opportunities, or to building resilience to future shocks and reducing risk.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Overall Assessment

Considering the complex and challenging circumstances in Somalia, WFP has strategically positioned itself well to respond to the needs of the population. The depth of collaboration and coherence with partners varied considerably, and broadly constrained opportunities to capitalize on internal and external synergies. Collaboration and alignment among United Nations agencies were challenging given the goal of achieving integrated humanitarian, development and political objectives. While national institutional capacity remains inadequate, there are opportunities to strengthen engagement with national partners especially in nutrition and education sectors.

The country portfolio was highly relevant and effective in addressing life-saving humanitarian needs, reflecting WFP’s strategic positioning and good cooperation with partners. WFP has been plausibly credited with making an important contribution to preventing famine in 2017. While the levels of the shocks in 2011 and 2017 were arguably comparable, there was no evidence of widespread mortality in 2017.

However, little progress has been made towards establishing a national social safety net. A strategy to address longer-term needs of urban internally displaced persons was lacking. Opportunities for a more profound gender and protection analyses were missed. Targeting of food assistance remained challenging, with a need to guard against the exclusion of marginalized groups.

**Recommendation 1.** Provide technical leadership in developing and piloting a national safety net programme – Somali Safety Net Programme – for addressing chronic, seasonal and acute needs.

**Recommendation 2.** Develop a longer-term approach to assisting internally displaced persons.

**Recommendation 3.** Shift the primary objective of FFA and FFT activities to creating productive assets and livelihoods.

**Recommendation 4.** Strengthen the integration of gender and protection considerations in programming.

**Recommendation 5.** Improve the targeting of beneficiaries, including internally displaced persons.

**Recommendation 6.** Engage in broader inter-agency dialogue for coordinating approaches to planning and implementing capacity building efforts.

**Recommendation 7.** Engage with the Ministry of Health on annual strategic planning and provide support to the integration of nutrition monitoring data into the ministry’s existing health management information system

**Recommendation 8.** Position and evaluate the contribution of school meals as part of an inter-agency education strategy.

### Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at <http://www1.wfp.org/independent-evaluation>  
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