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Summary report on the evaluation of the WFP corporate (Level 3) emergency response in northeast Nigeria (2016–2018)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the WFP corporate (Level 3) emergency response in northeast Nigeria covered all WFP activities in the region from 2016 to 2018. It assessed the appropriateness of design and delivery, operational performance and factors and quality of strategic decision making. It offers corporate opportunities for learning, as well as country-specific recommendations.

Since 2009, violent attacks on civilians have displaced large numbers of people in northeast Nigeria. The conflict has worsened chronic food and nutrition insecurity. At the peak of the crisis, in 2016–2017, over 3 million people were classified as being in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Phase 3 (crisis), 4 (emergency) or 5 (famine).

The evaluation found that the WFP response was broadly appropriate, as WFP both drew on, and contributed to, improved assessment of needs. There was a lack of transparency, however, between the assessment results and WFP operational plans. The nutrition strategy was well adapted to the circumstances. The initial cash-based response was appropriate but the assessment of the delivery mechanism was inadequate. Risks were identified from the outset but important protection risks were not addressed in a timely way. In addition, important opportunities for gender analysis were missed. The programme was not fully compliant with humanitarian principles and, while trade-offs on principles may be inevitable, decisions do not appear to have been made strategically or coherently among humanitarian agencies.

Food assistance and nutrition activities were scaled up rapidly and covered large numbers of beneficiaries but fell somewhat short of targets, with little evidence of outcomes. The delivery and utility of common services generally exceeded targets. The decision on WFP's entry into Nigeria was slow and delayed by political factors. The regional bureau for West Africa played an important role in establishing the operation but the country office struggled with frequent changes in leadership and staffing. Limited progress was made in building national capacities and accountability through capacity strengthening.

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The ability of WFP to rapidly scale up was impressive and is credibly associated with food security improvements. WFP was slower to deliver a high-quality response, however. A more robust approach is required to ensure that beneficiaries are either moved to government support or provided with sustainable livelihood opportunities or other avenues for self-reliance. Given the continuing high rates of food insecurity and the highly unpredictable security situation, life-saving assistance is a continuing priority, and WFP needs to advocate vigorously for such needs to be met in full.

The evaluation generated seven recommendations for WFP: i) to enhance coverage of, and preparedness plans for, major emergencies in countries where WFP does not have a presence; ii) to strengthen corporate capacity to rapidly deploy sufficiently experienced staff to lead and manage the in-country emergency response; iii) to strengthen support for country offices in planning, delivering and reporting on capacity strengthening for national institutions in emergencies; iv) to maintain a core strategic focus on addressing the immediate needs of affected populations in northeast Nigeria; v) to appropriately promote the application of humanitarian principles and equal access to food and nutrition assistance; vi) to reinforce efforts to mainstream gender in programme activities; and vii) to clarify and improve its targeting approach.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the WFP corporate (Level 3) emergency response in northeast Nigeria (2016–2018) (WFP/EB.2/2019/6-A) and management response WFP/EB.2/2019/6-A/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account the considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. This evaluation spans WFP operations conducted between March 2016 and November 2018 in northeast Nigeria. It addresses three evaluation questions, on the appropriateness of design and delivery, operational performance and factors and quality of strategic decision making. It offers corporate opportunities for learning relevant to the establishment of an in-country presence, at scale, in a complex operating environment, and provides insights to the Nigeria country office as it starts implementing its first country strategic plan (CSP), covering the period 2019–2022.
2. The evaluation was conducted by WFP's independent Office of Evaluation, together with an external independent evaluation team that collected evidence at the headquarters, regional and country levels, through the following lines of inquiry:
 - a desk review of quantitative and qualitative secondary data;
 - a field visit to WFP operations in northeast Nigeria, including Maiduguri and Damaturu;
 - 112 key informant interviews at the international, national and state levels with representatives of WFP, partners, governments and donors; and
 - 21 focus-group discussions with affected populations in deep-field locations, of which 12 were held with internally displaced women and host community members.
3. The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, and findings from various data sources were triangulated during the analysis phase to achieve consensus on findings and conclusions. The design of the evaluation strongly emphasized the integration of gender and protection issues. In addition to the usual confidentiality arrangements, ethical standards were applied to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of those involved in the evaluation. The team did not encounter major constraints that compromised the overall validity of the evaluation.

Context

4. Nigeria has been classified as a lower-middle income economy since 2008¹ and ranked as Africa's largest economy in 2016.² Persistent inequality is evident, however, with more than half the population living in poverty. Poverty is most severe in the northeast and northwest, with rates of 77.7 percent and 76.3 percent, respectively.³ Traditional socio-cultural gender roles, relatively low levels of education and exclusion from social and political decision making rendered women in the northeast vulnerable even before the current crisis.
5. Since 2009, violent attacks on civilians by non-state armed groups have caused massive displacement of people in the Lake Chad Basin. It is estimated that more than 20,000 people have been killed in northeast Nigeria during the current crisis.⁴ The number of internally displaced people rose to a peak of 1.65 million in June 2015 in Borno State alone (figure 1).

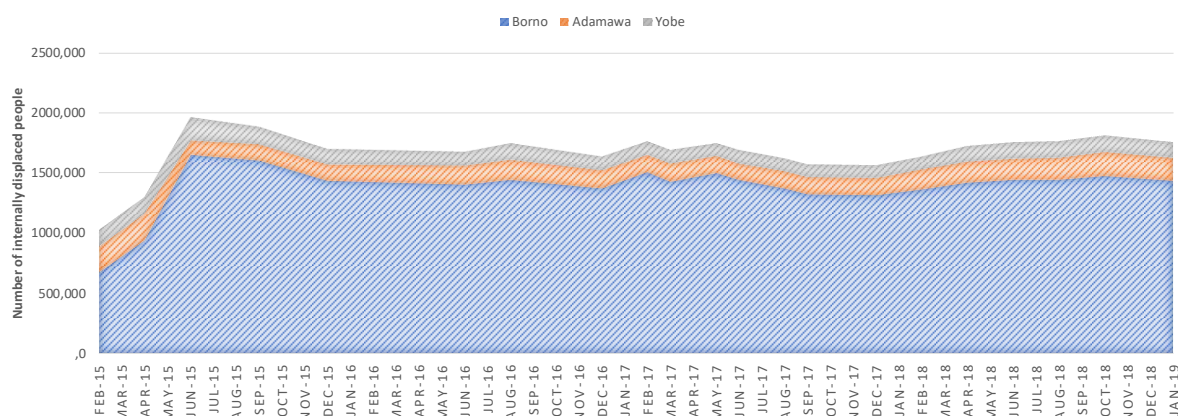
¹ World Bank. *Worldbank Country and Lending Groups*. <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>.

² International Monetary Fund. 2016. *World Economic Outlook: Subdued Demand: Symptoms and Remedies*. <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2016/12/31/Subdued-Demand-Symptoms-and-Remedies>.

³ Press briefing by the Statistician-General of the Federation/Chief Executive Officer, National Bureau of Statistics. 2012. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/b410c26c2921c18a6839baebc9b1428fa98fa36a.pdf>.

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2017. *2018 Humanitarian Response Plan Nigeria*. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018_hrp_v5.4.pdf.

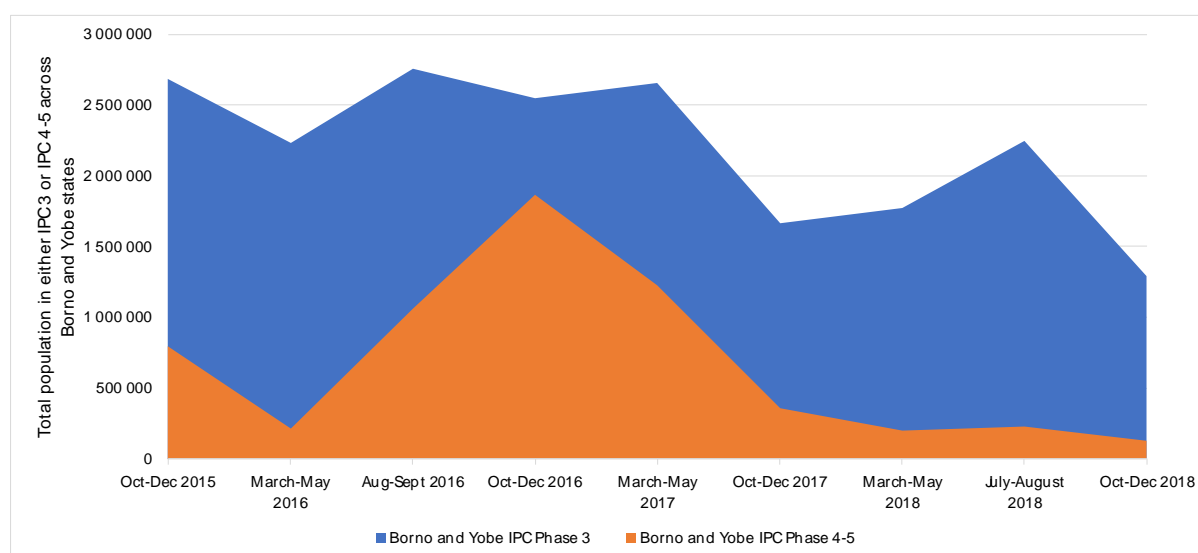
Figure 1: Number of internally displaced people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states (February 2015–December 2018)



Source: International Organization for Migration. Displacement Tracking Matrix 2015–2018.

6. Even before the conflict, the northeast experienced extremely high rates of chronic malnutrition. Since 2012, the conflict has worsened the food security and nutrition situation, causing widespread loss of livelihoods and reducing access to essential social services. A December 2016 Famine Early Warning Systems Network report argued that a famine had already occurred in parts of Borno State.⁵ Figure 2 shows the trend in food insecurity in Borno and Yobe states. The latest projections by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network indicate that much of the northeast is likely to remain in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 (crisis) or Phase 4 (emergency) until at least September 2019,⁶ as the military offensives continue, causing ongoing displacement.

Figure 2: Cadre harmonisé* phase classification: IPC phases 3–5 (October 2015–December 2018)



Source: Cadre harmonisé data, October 2015–May 2018.

* The cadre harmonisé is the current regional framework for consensual analysis of food insecurity situations

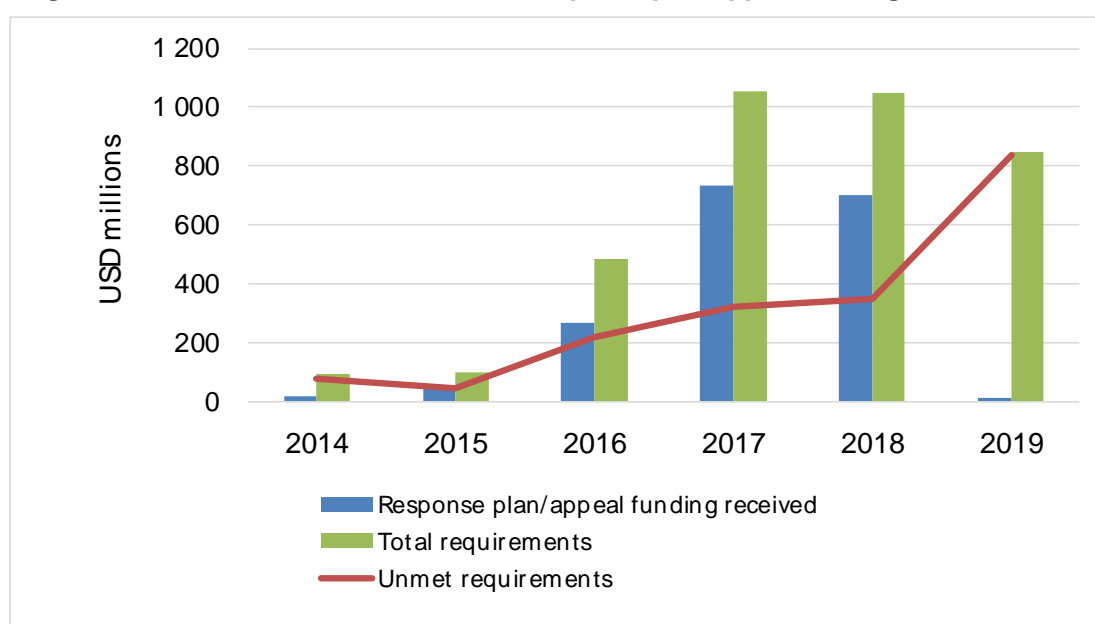
7. The Government ministries and entities involved in humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria included the National Emergency Management Agency, the Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative and the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning (inter-ministerial task

⁵ Famine Early Warning Systems Network. 2016. *Famine risk in northern and central Borno State*. https://fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FEWS%20NET%20Borno%20Analysis_20161213release.pdf.

⁶ Famine Early Warning Systems Network. 2019. *Nigeria Food Security Outlook Update*. http://fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/NIGERIA%20FSOU_April%202019_Final_2_rev.pdf.

- force lead), with support from the Emergency Coordination Centre. The evaluation was not able to access consolidated information on government assistance to internally displaced people.
8. The National Emergency Management Agency is responsible for coordinating humanitarian assistance at the federal level, along with the Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative. WFP is mandated to co-lead the food security sector and lead the logistics and emergency telecommunications sectors.⁷ Nigeria's federated structure gives significant autonomy to states, and the State Emergency Management Agency leads coordination at the state level.
 9. United Nations entities, including WFP, coordinate their response under humanitarian response plans for Nigeria, which have been produced since 2014. Total humanitarian response plan appeal funding is shown in figure 3.

Figure 3: Trends in annual humanitarian response plan appeal funding (USD millions)



Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Financial Tracking Service.

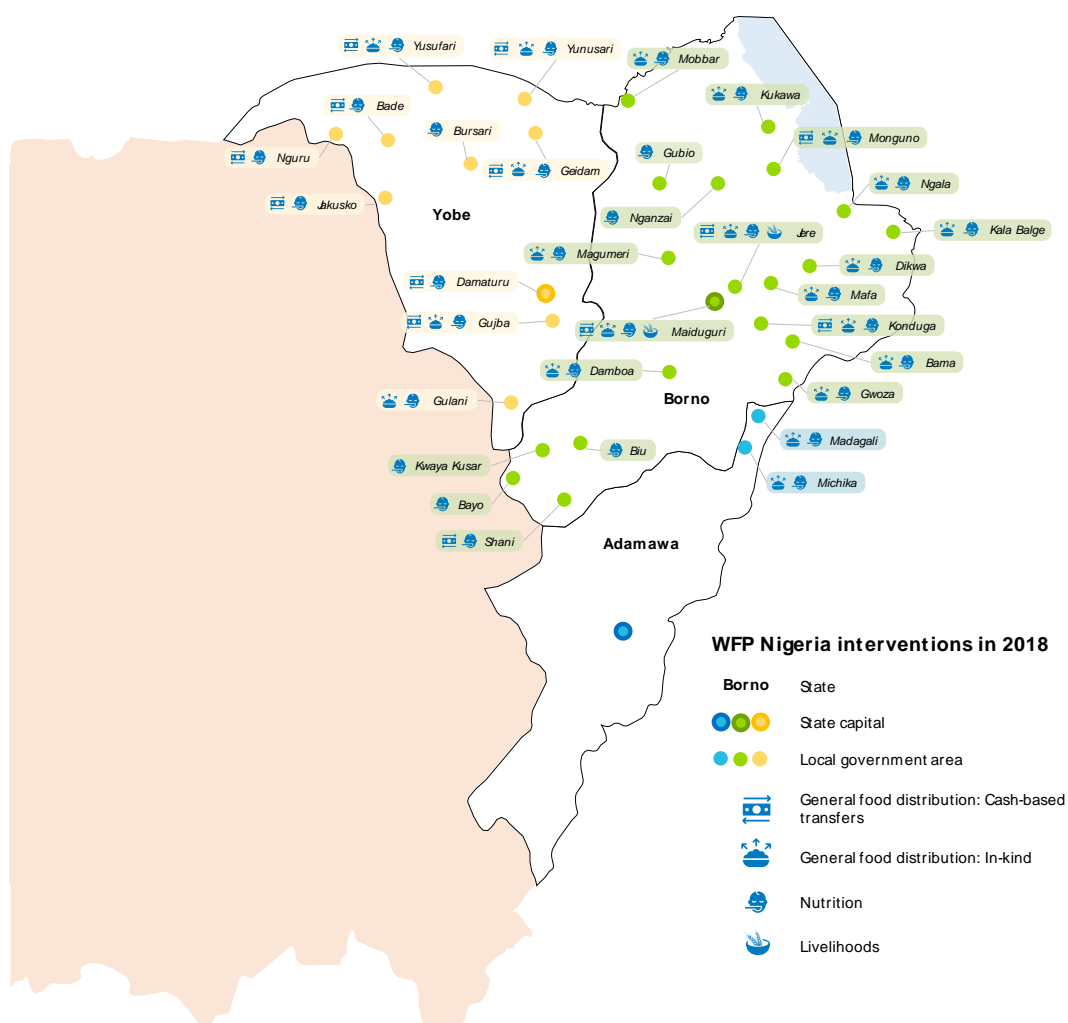
WFP portfolio

10. The operations included in the scope of the evaluation are the West Africa regional emergency operation 200777 activities implemented in Nigeria, special operations 200834 and 201032, immediate response emergency operation 200969 and operations under immediate response preparation account 200965.
11. The activities supported by WFP in northeast Nigeria have evolved over time and have included:
 - a) capacity strengthening for the National Emergency Management Agency, extended to the state emergency management agencies in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states starting in 2015;
 - b) a pilot project for cash-based transfers via mobile money transfers starting in March 2016;
 - c) food and nutrition security assistance through in-kind, mobile cash and e-voucher transfers and blanket supplementary feeding programmes in response to a request by the Government of Nigeria in April 2016 to support its effort to address the food security situation in northeast Nigeria;

⁷ The cluster system has not been activated in Nigeria; sectors are co-chaired by an international lead and the Government of Nigeria.

- d) from June 2016, treatment and support for households with members suffering from moderate acute malnutrition, with nutrition-sensitive interventions added in July 2017; and
- e) livelihood recovery activities commencing in October 2017.
12. As more areas became accessible to the humanitarian community, WFP's operation expanded geographically from 2 local government areas in 2016 to 27 in 2018, covering the states of Borno and Yobe and parts of Adamawa. As at September 2018, the Nigeria portion of regional emergency operation 200777 was targeting 2.1 million beneficiaries, 54 percent of whom were women. The coverage of WFP activities under this emergency operation in 2018 is shown in figure 4.
13. Importantly, WFP managed three common services on behalf of the humanitarian community, providing United Nations Humanitarian Air Service flight services and leading the logistics and emergency telecommunications sectors, in addition to co-leading the food security sector.

Figure 4: WFP Nigeria interventions in 2018



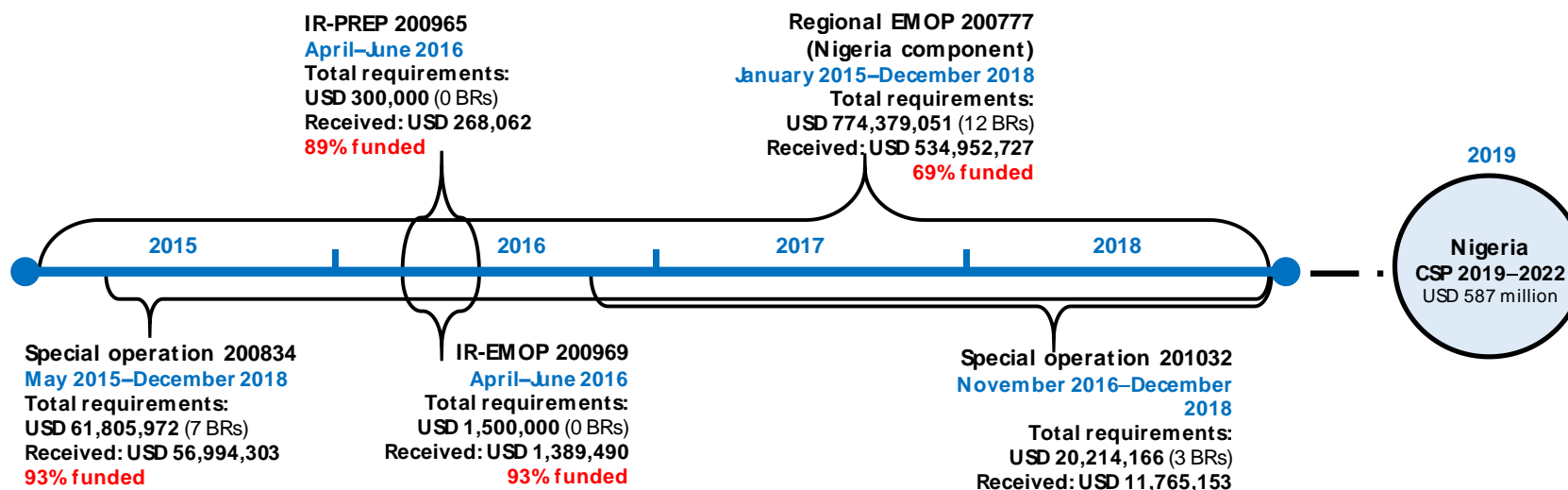
14. In line with WFP corporate strategy, the Nigeria country office has prepared a CSP for the period 2019–2022, in line with the national priorities articulated in Nigeria's Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017–2020⁸ and the Buhari Plan.⁹

⁸ Government of Nigeria, Ministry of Budget and National Planning. 2017. *Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017–2020*. <https://yourbudget.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Economic-Recovery-Growth-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>.

⁹ Government of Nigeria, Presidential Committee on the North East Initiative. 2016. *Rebuilding the North East. The Buhari Plan*. Vol. I-IV.

15. The timeline and resource situation of the Nigeria operations are summarized in figure 5.

Figure 5: WFP Nigeria timeline and resource situation



Top five donors by operation 2016-2018					
EMOP 200777 (Nigeria component)		Special operation 200834		Special operation 201032	
Donor	Funding level (USD)	Donor	Funding level (USD)	Donor	Funding level (USD)
United States	251 111 221	United Kingdom	21 385 294	United States	4 000 527
United Kingdom	145 735 682	United States	13 500 000	Sweden	2 377 416
European Commission	34 790 733	European Commission	6 788 198	Germany	1 672 952
Germany	28 620 121	Germany	4 446 640	European Commission	1 435 334
Canada	16 467 920	Sweden	2 200 024	United Nations country-based pooled funds	827 002
Total requirements	774 379 051	Total requirements	58 231 370	Total requirements	20 214 166
Total received	534 952 727	Total received	54 185 440	Total received	11 765 153
% of requirements	69	% of requirements	93	% of requirements	58

Source: Funds received sourced from WFP's corporate system for contribution statistics WINGS report: Distribution contribution and forecast statistics 2019-02-03. Total requirements sourced from the FACTory/WINGS report: Country: Nigeria - Needs and allocated contributions. All data extracted February 2019. Abbreviations: BR = budget revision; EMOP = emergency operation; IR-PREP = immediate response account for preparedness; IR-EMOP = immediate response emergency operation.

Evaluation findings

Alignment with identified humanitarian needs and relevant national policies

16. WFP has drawn on an increasingly detailed understanding of needs to underpin its operational planning. WFP was a key partner in developing and implementing the multi-agency cadre harmonisé food security analysis, with added input from internal assessments and situation monitoring. Nutrition surveys were available from 2013 onwards; however, there was a lack of information on the needs of an estimated 823,000 people living in inaccessible areas controlled by non-State armed groups.¹⁰ WFP operational plans were broadly aligned with the cadre harmonisé results, most clearly in terms of geographic targeting. There is a lack of transparency, however, in the relationship between the overall needs assessment and WFP operational plans and “prioritized” beneficiary numbers.
17. The values of in-kind and cash-based transfers and nutrition commodities were generally appropriate for the context and were regularly monitored and adjusted. In late 2016, a decision was made to change the cereal in the food basket from rice to sorghum or millet based on cost considerations. This required beneficiaries to invest more time, labour and fuel in food preparation, however, and did not coincide with beneficiary preferences.
18. While the in-kind ration was calculated on a per capita basis, the cash-based transfer was set at a standard amount per household, creating tensions in some locations. The elderly and persons with disabilities were prioritized alongside other vulnerable groups during targeting and distribution, but the type of assistance was not specifically adapted to their needs.
19. A cash-based response was an appropriate modality given the initial urban operational context and the functionality of local markets; however, there was minimal assessment of the operational feasibility of using mobile money as a delivery mechanism. WFP encountered significant challenges with the chosen cash delivery mechanism, including low beneficiary access to and familiarity with mobile phone technology, inability to perform programmatic reconciliation and liquidity problems. WFP subsequently adapted its approach to include the use of e-vouchers and in-kind distributions.
20. The nutrition strategy appears to have been well adapted to the circumstances. As the Government did not have a treatment protocol in place for moderate acute malnutrition, it was decided not to initiate a large-scale moderate acute malnutrition treatment response, which was an appropriate and pragmatic decision.
21. The inclusion of livelihood activities for both internally displaced people and host communities was consistent with the contextual assessment. There was little evidence of clear strategic decision making on the selection of projects, beneficiaries and locations, however, or of a clear strategy for ensuring that the large number of general food assistance beneficiaries made a transition to sustainable livelihood opportunities, although it is noted that agricultural livelihoods were severely constrained by limited access to secure farmland.
22. Overall, the WFP programme was found to be technically consistent with national development and emergency response policies. It was notable, however, that national policies were not seen by stakeholders as influential in shaping the response strategy.
23. From the outset, WFP paid close attention to risk management and analysis. This included early placement of specialist staff and the use of the corporate risk register as a core tool for identifying and managing risk. A memorandum of understanding between the Economic and Financial

¹⁰ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2018. *North-East Nigeria: Humanitarian Situation Update – Progress on key activities from the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan, November 2018 edition*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/north-east-nigeria-humanitarian-situation-update-progress-key-activities-2018-6>.

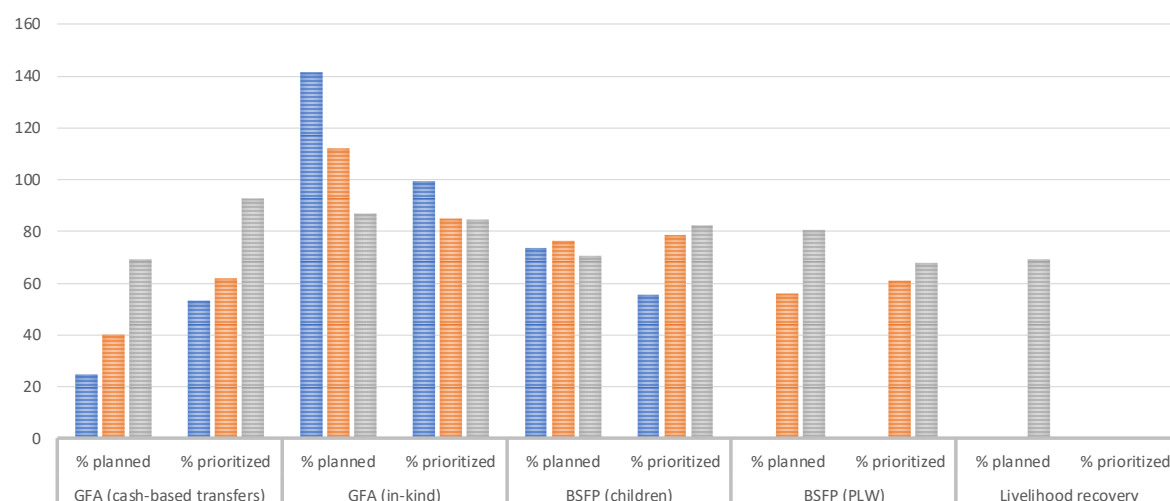
Crimes Commission and the WFP Office of Inspections and Investigations was established to conduct detailed investigations on allegations of fraud. The volatile security situation in the northeast required WFP to balance risk exposure for staff and partners with ensuring access to assistance. Department of Safety and Security restrictions on the presence of staff in deep-field locations was felt to have a negative impact on programme quality, and WFP lobbied for relaxation of the most onerous restrictions.

24. To help identify protection risks, WFP appointed a full-time protection officer in July 2016 and established multiple complaint and feedback mechanisms. The Programme was slow to address identified protection risks, however, including the risks for women collecting firewood outside camps, the use of transactional sex to gain access to items not included in the food basket and abuses by mobile money agents.
25. There was widespread concern among stakeholders on the application of humanitarian principles. Stakeholders argued that the United Nations in Nigeria had not been vocal enough on the need to ease some of the restrictions on humanitarian assistance enforced by the Nigerian security forces or to advocate a more principled approach and had paid limited attention to needs in areas outside of government control. The evaluation team noted that WFP's close adherence to political and military strategies in the northeast had had a negative impact on the perceptions and realities of neutrality, impartiality and operational independence.
26. While compromises are inevitable in complex emergencies like that taking place in Nigeria, decisions do not appear to have always been made strategically and coherently among humanitarian agencies. The current WFP management team is credited with pushing for more principled engagement.

Operational performance and results

27. The initial targeting and registration process enabled WFP to quickly identify beneficiaries and distribute assistance but resulted in high inclusion and exclusion errors. These have persisted, despite subsequent retargeting efforts, due to insufficient communication by WFP, the varying experience and capacity of cooperating partners and the partiality of local leaders.
28. With the exception of in-kind food assistance, WFP has not met either the planned or the lower prioritized beneficiary targets (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Percentage of planned and prioritized beneficiaries reached, by activity (2016–2018)

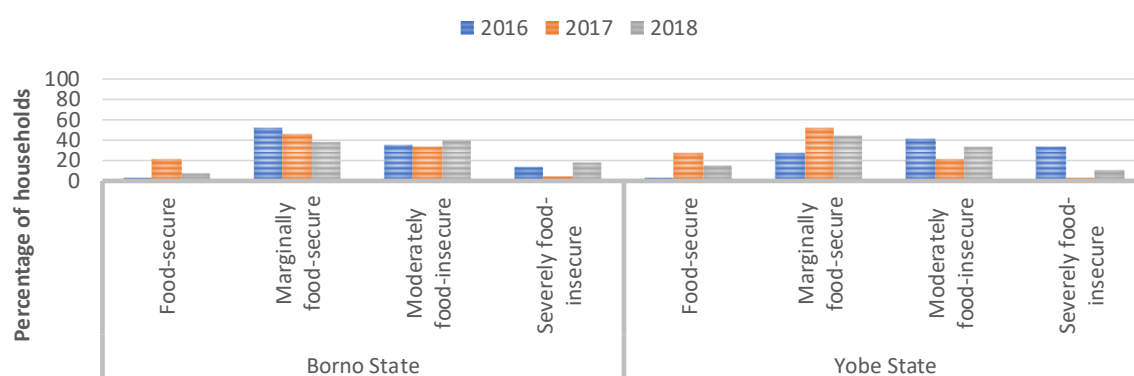


Source: Planned: country office tool for managing effectively (COMET) report CM-C004 for 2016–2018, final figures provided by the country office. Prioritized: Nigeria executive briefs and Nigeria internal situation reports 2016–2018.

Abbreviations: BSFP = blanket supplementary feeding programme; GFA = general food assistance; PLW = pregnant and lactating women.

29. Challenges in using mobile money have persisted, although the introduction of in-kind assistance in July 2016 and e-vouchers in February 2017 facilitated improved performance against targets. The collective sector-level coverage of food assistance needs has been consistently low, however, with a 65 percent gap in 2018.¹¹
30. Monitoring of WFP food assistance outcomes (figure 7) shows that large proportions of WFP beneficiaries remain food-insecure despite ongoing food assistance. This is not easily reconciled with cadre harmonisé results showing a significant improvement in food security since 2016, and it requires further analysis.

Figure 7: Consolidated reporting on food security outcomes (2016–2018)

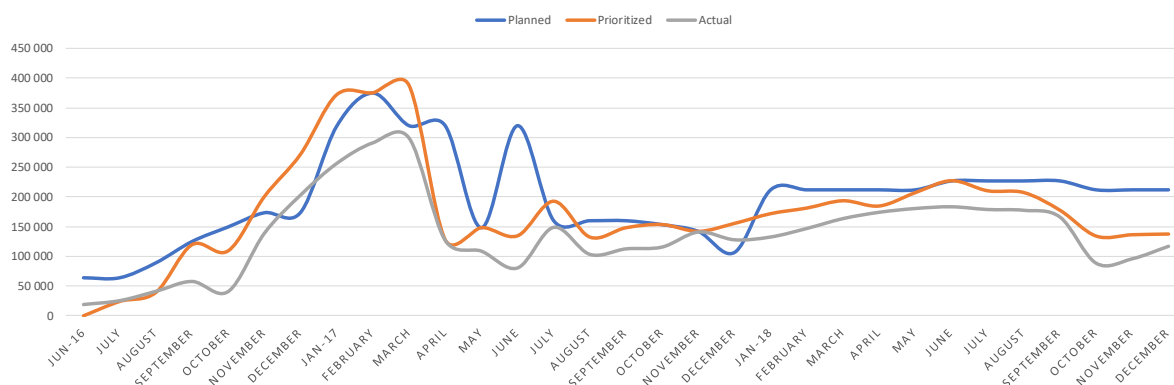


Source: Compiled from WFP outcome post-distribution monitoring, December 2016; food security outcome monitoring, September 2017; and food security outcome monitoring, August 2018.

31. While WFP blanket supplementary feeding programme coverage is 75 percent of households targeted for general food assistance, the actual coverage rates would be closer to 20–30 percent if considered as a percentage of the total population of children 6–23 months of age. Figure 8 shows the planned, prioritized and actual regional emergency operation 200777 blanket supplementary feeding programme beneficiary numbers for children age 6–59 months. A significant pipeline break in April 2017 further affected nutrition performance. The nutrition-specific outcome indicators used by WFP have changed over time, and evaluation stakeholders felt that WFP's nutrition activities had not been implemented on a scale sufficient to make a noticeable difference to overall global and moderate acute malnutrition rates.

¹¹ Food Security Cluster. *Food Security Sector Dashboard, November 2018*. <https://fscluster.org/nigeria/document/food-security-sector-dashboard-november>.

**Figure 8: Blanket supplementary feeding programme beneficiaries (6–59 months)
(June 2016–December 2018)**



Source: Planned and actual figures: COMET report CM-C004 for 2016–2018; final figures provided by the country office. Prioritized figures: Nigeria executive briefs and Nigeria internal situation reports 2016–2018.

32. Livelihood activities have been implemented since October 2017, reaching some 29,000 households (approximately 17 percent of total households to be targeted between 2017 and 2020). Due to widespread insecurity, there have been consistent challenges in finding secure farmland for agriculture-related projects. Sector-wide, 1.9 million people are receiving agriculture and livelihood support,¹² almost entirely through other agencies. The evaluation did not reveal any outcome (as opposed to output) monitoring of livelihood activities.
33. Common service performance has generally exceeded targets. Performance against WFP targets is summarized in table 1 for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, in table 2 for the logistics sector and in table 3 for the emergency telecommunications sector.

¹² *Ibid.*

TABLE 1: UNITED NATIONS HUMANITARIAN AIR SERVICE PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUTPUT TARGETS				
	2016		2017	
Indicator	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Metric tons of cargo transported	25	59	84	159
Number of passengers transported	8 400	14 796	18 000	48 849
Number of agencies and organizations using humanitarian air services	50	64	70	92
Number of destinations served	9	17	20	16
Percentage response to medical and security evacuation	100	100	100	100

Source: WFP standard project reports data for 2016 and 2017.

TABLE 2: LOGISTICS SECTOR PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUTPUT TARGETS				
	2016		2017	
Indicator	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Number of agencies and organizations using coordination and logistics services (2016) and number of agencies and organizations using logistics coordination services (2017)	27	15	27	44
Number of organizations contributing to pipeline/planning, logistics assessment and/or capacity information to be shared	N/A	N/A	13	12
Number of organizations utilizing storage and cargo consolidation services	N/A	N/A	13	30
Organizations participating in Logistics Sector activities (coordination, information management or logistics services) responding to a user survey with a satisfaction rate of 85 percent or higher	N/A	N/A	85	82
Percentage of cargo movement requests served against requested	N/A	N/A	95	92
Percentage of service requests to handle, store and/or transport cargo fulfilled	85	100	85	100

Source: WFP standard project reports data for 2016 and 2017.

Abbreviations: N/A = not applicable

TABLE 3: EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUTPUT TARGETS				
	2016		2017	
Indicator	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Number of radio-rooms (COMCEN) established	3	2	3	6
Number of operational areas covered by common security telecommunication network	4	1	6	6
Number of operational areas covered by data communications services	5	0	6	5
Number of operational areas covered with charging stations	3	0	N/R	0
Number of United Nations agency/NGO staff members trained in radio communications	60	10	120	533
Number of ETS meetings conducted on local and global levels	6	5	48	31
Number of ETS user satisfaction surveys conducted	0	1	N/A	N/A

Source: WFP standard project reports data for 2016 and 2017.

Abbreviations: COMCEN = communications centre; ETS = emergency telecommunications sector; N/A = not applicable; NGO = non-governmental organization; N/R = not reported

34. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service is widely credited with playing a pivotal role in supporting the ability and willingness of partners to work in previously inaccessible locations. Beyond Maiduguri there are very few options, and agencies largely relied exclusively on communication services provided by the emergency telecommunications sector. The evaluation found the logistics sector services to be generally relevant, although some of the stakeholders interviewed questioned the cost-benefit ratio of the sector's warehousing capacity.
35. WFP achieved an impressive scale up in beneficiaries, reaching more than one million by January 2017.¹³ Several factors underpinned the speed of scale up, including:
- expanded access for humanitarian agencies;
 - the location of a Global Commodity Management Facility depot in Kano, which provided additional flexibility in the supply chain;
 - direct distributions through a rapid response mechanism launched by WFP and the United Nations Children's Fund until non-governmental organizations could establish a presence; and

¹³ WFP standard project report 2016. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/48fac7ec50db4b428a750ea9e929152a/download/>.

- waivers on selected procedures provided by headquarters.
36. The rapid scale up had implications for programme quality, however, and WFP has struggled to rectify quality issues since the start of operations.
37. Analysis of the cost efficiency of WFP's operations is constrained by the fact that budget and expenditure data were only available for high-level cost categories. Cost savings associated with replacing rice with sorghum and millet were offset by increased protection risks. Duplications in staffing in the Maiduguri area office and the country office in Abuja contributed to higher costs that are still being rationalized.
38. The evaluation found that inadequate attention was paid to gender in the Nigeria response, with a failure to implement corporate guidance and standards, including the failure to develop a country-level gender baseline and action plan. Responsibility for gender in the country office remained an "add-on" responsibility. The use of gender analysis to inform programme design and implementation was limited. The only gender-specific action was the prioritization of young children and pregnant and lactating women.
39. Positive achievements with respect to gender were nevertheless found. For the gender indicators reported, WFP exceeded its set targets (table 4) due to the promotion of women's participation in food assistance activities and an improved gender balance in food assistance and nutrition teams. Recently, the Nigeria CSP has resulted in greater investment in gender and the WFP gender focal point and the start of gender capacity strengthening initiatives; however, these need to be well-grounded in a formal gender action plan to be effective.

TABLE 4: PERFORMANCE AGAINST GENDER OUTCOME TARGETS (2016–2018)				
Cross-cutting gender indicators	Project end target	General food assistance		
		2016	2017	2018
Proportion of households where females and males together make decisions about the use of cash, vouchers or food	50	51	63	54
Proportion of households where females make decisions about the use of cash, vouchers or food	25	20	19	31
Proportion of households where males make decisions about the use of cash, vouchers or food	25	29	18	15
Proportion of women beneficiaries in leadership positions of project management committees	50	60	N/R	N/R
Proportion of women project management committee members trained in modalities of food, cash or voucher distribution	60	60	N/R	N/R

Source: WFP standard project reports data for 2016–2018.

Abbreviations: N/R = not reported.

Factors and quality of strategic decision making

40. The decision to become operational in northeast Nigeria took time, and WFP only became fully operational after August 2016, at a time when famine had already occurred in some parts of the northeast.¹⁴ While access to the area was severely curtailed in the build-up to the crisis, early warning signs had been emerging since 2012. The response lag can be partly explained by the

¹⁴ Famine Early Warning Systems Network. 2016. *Famine risk in northern and central Borno State*. https://fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/FEWS%20NET%20Borno%20%20Analysis_20161213release.pdf.

- time it took to establish the necessary understanding of the capacities and limitations of Nigerian response institutions and the need for an official government request for assistance.
41. Strong technical and administrative support and guidance for the response was provided by the regional bureau, including by nutrition, protection and cash-based transfer advisors, but technical support on livelihoods and capacity strengthening was less evident. Headquarters engagement was initially very hands-on but responsibility was subsequently largely delegated to the regional bureau despite the continuation of Level 3 status.
 42. The evaluation found that WFP had a well-developed suite of technical and administrative policies and guidance to support programming. This was well-utilized in areas such as nutrition, in-kind assistance, supply chain and human resources. Some guidance was inadequately applied, however, due to inexperienced staff and headquarters waivers. Other guidance proved problematic, such as the decision to select Nigeria as a phase I CSP pilot country while concurrently managing a major emergency. Some guidance could be improved, including aspects of humanitarian access and principles, capacity strengthening, complaint and feedback mechanisms and targeting.
 43. The early months of the operation were mostly run by staff on mission or secondment (temporary duty) arrangements. When the Level 3 emergency was declared, five concurrent Level 3 emergencies were already stretching WFP's ability to field appropriately skilled staff through its emergency roster.¹⁵ Temporary duty assignments were often highly effective but were nevertheless compromised by a lack of continuity and handover arrangements.
 44. Long-term international staff were reluctant to be based in the northeast due to insecurity, poor living conditions and changes in United Nations allowances for hardship postings. Consequently, there was a reliance on consultants, some of whom had no experience with WFP processes or corporate guidance. There were frequent leadership changes in the country office, with no fewer than three emergency coordinators, three country directors and two deputy country directors. This had a significant impact on the development of a strategic vision and programmatic oversight.
 45. Recruitment of national staff took several months, complicated by strict – albeit appropriate – due diligence requirements. As Nigeria did not have a history of humanitarian operations, many applicants lacked emergency expertise, with a consequent need for training and induction.
 46. The country office worked hard to establish partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders, including international and national non-governmental organizations, as well as other United Nations entities and international organizations. In the early stages of the operation a lack of staff familiarity with WFP corporate systems resulted in delays in the signing of partner agreements and insufficient assessment of partner capacity.
 47. WFP engaged with a wide range of coordination mechanisms at both the federal and state government levels. Coordination responsibilities in the Government were unclear, however, especially in 2015, and overlapped with those of multiple institutions tasked with national- and state-level emergency coordination.
 48. WFP worked closely on training and policy processes with the Government of Nigeria, under a memorandum of understanding with the National Emergency Management Agency and in close liaison with the State Emergency Management Agency and federal and state ministries responsible for health and of agriculture. This covered the principles of cash-based transfers, beneficiary registration, food supply chain management, food basket composition, food security and vulnerability assessment, food security assessment and data analysis.¹⁶ WFP also worked

¹⁵ For Iraq, South Sudan, Southern Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen.

¹⁶ WFP standard project report, 2016. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/48fac7ec50db4b428a750ea9e929152a/download/>.

closely with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and the National Bureau of Statistics on food security assessments and technical support for the cadre harmonisé. The WFP nutrition team also worked with the Federal Ministry of Health and the United Nations Children's Fund on activities related to the revision of the protocol for community-based management of acute malnutrition to include moderate acute malnutrition treatment and prevention, with a draft protocol under discussion at the time of the evaluation field mission.

49. While these capacity strengthening activities were well received and relevant, interviewees pointed to missed opportunities in building government capacity for preparedness and emergency response more holistically. Capacity strengthening outputs seem to have been mostly ad-hoc, with no monitoring of outcomes.
50. Humanitarian access has increased considerably but still remains heavily constrained. This led to the roll-out of a humanitarian country team access strategy and civil-military coordination guidance in 2018. At the time of the evaluation, WFP was working on the development of a WFP-specific access strategy for Nigeria.
51. WFP's Nigeria operations, including the emergency operation and common services support, were relatively well resourced. Contributory factors included the provision of information on the severity of the crisis, packaging Nigeria as part of the "four famines" appeal at the global level and declaring a Level 3 emergency. A humanitarian conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad region held in Oslo in February 2017 further focused attention.¹⁷ Appropriate use was made of a variety of internal advance funding mechanisms to both kick-start operations and smooth the flow of multilateral funds.
52. Several stakeholders contended that prior to 2015 there had been limited political will in the Government to support the population in the northeast and that this had contributed to the delayed start-up of the response. A change of government following elections in 2015, complemented by international advocacy, subsequently created the conditions in which humanitarian operations could be conducted.

Conclusions

53. The ability of WFP to scale up from zero to a million beneficiaries in northeast Nigeria by the end of 2016 is impressive and is credibly associated with food security improvements. WFP failed to bring operations to scale before famine-like conditions had already occurred, however, despite early warning of the deteriorating food and nutrition situation.
54. The effective scale up was underpinned by the efficient recruiting of a large complement of national staff and an effective supply chain and logistics operation. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, emergency telecommunications and logistics common services were universally appreciated and widely seen as essential to humanitarian access. WFP analytical services were effective in undertaking needs assessment and protection and risk analysis.
55. The rapid scale up led to challenges in beneficiary targeting, the choice of cash transfer delivery mechanisms, gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming. While some quality trade-offs are understandable in the context of the rapid scale up of a major operation from scratch, what is less understandable is the length of time taken to implement corrective measures.
56. Frequent changes in senior leadership at the country level coupled with unclear responsibilities and reporting lines for staff in the Maiduguri and Abuja offices resulted in an overall lack of programmatic oversight and at times compromised credibility with donors. There was a lack of continuity and handover by temporary duty staff and some key positions were filled by relatively

¹⁷ Reliefweb. 2017. *Oslo humanitarian conference for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region raises \$672 million to help people in need.* <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/oslo-humanitarian-conference-nigeria-and-lake-chad-region-raises-672-million-help>.

inexperienced staff. Conversely, many of the functional areas where WFP performed best were led by experienced staff who were appointed early and have remained in post.

57. In common with the United Nations response as a whole, WFP has struggled to adhere to humanitarian principles. A lack of leadership and commitment undermined a neutral, impartial and operationally independent humanitarian response. While absolute adherence to the principles is not always practical and trade-offs may be inevitable, decisions do not appear to have been made strategically and coherently among humanitarian agencies.
58. The complexity and scale of the food security crisis in northeast Nigeria requires a response that effectively draws together the contributions of multiple government, international and non-governmental entities. While there were many specific examples of WFP participating in multi-agency action during the period evaluated, there are important opportunities to further develop and strengthen coordination and partnership approaches.
59. Increasing attention to the role of WFP in strengthening the capacity of national institutions has not yet been matched by investment in staff capacities, resources or guidance. Capacity strengthening support has remained ad-hoc and no proper assessment of the capacity of Nigerian institutions has been conducted; nor has a plan been developed to support the goal of supporting national ownership of the response. There has been limited progress in building national capacity and accountability.
60. Looking ahead, there is a need for a more robust approach to ensuring that beneficiaries are either moved to government support or provided with sustainable livelihood opportunities or other avenues for self-reliance. A primary programmatic approach of achieving transition through household-level livelihood interventions is of doubtful effectiveness under the current circumstances.
61. Despite considerable achievements, large gaps in the overall humanitarian response remain in the areas of food assistance, nutrition support and livelihood recovery. Given the continuing high rates of food insecurity and the highly unpredictable security situation, life-saving assistance is a continuing priority. WFP should advocate vigorously for these needs to be met in full and general food assistance should be maintained, given the highly unpredictable and fluid security situation.

Recommendations

62. The following seven recommendations are derived from the evaluation findings and conclusions and were informed by an evaluation workshop in April 2019. Some call for action at the corporate level, while others are to be addressed by the regional bureau and country office.

No	Issue	Recommendation	Responsibility
1	WFP should enhance coverage of, and preparedness plans for, major emergencies in countries where WFP does not have a presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review the responsibilities for, and coverage by regional bureaux of, countries where WFP does not have a presence. b) Consider posting WFP “antenna” staff in countries where WFP does not have a presence identified as being at risk of food security crises. c) Develop and regularly update scenario-based contingency plans for expanding WFP’s footprint in countries where WFP does not have a presence. d) Consider developing short papers on key lessons from past operations in similar contexts to aid the start-up of responses. 	Headquarters/(OSE), in conjunction with the regional bureau
2	WFP should strengthen corporate capacity to rapidly deploy sufficiently experienced staff to lead and manage the in-country emergency response on a sustained basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Urgently develop a pool of qualified and trained leadership staff available for medium- to long-term deployments in Level 3 emergencies, including as emergency coordinators, heads of programme, country directors and deputy country directors. a) Review and revise the guidelines for adding candidates to the emergency roster. b) Review arrangements for effective handover from outgoing temporary duty staff and temporary duty replacements and long-term staff. c) Institutionalize arrangements for the rapid onboarding of national staff through predefinition of mandatory training and induction packages, specifically on core corporate tools, including the COMET and the Logistics Execution Support System. 	Headquarters/(OSE)

No	Issue	Recommendation	Responsibility
3	WFP should strengthen support for country offices in planning, delivering and reporting on capacity strengthening for national institutions in emergencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Position capacity strengthening more prominently and develop a corporate resource mobilization strategy. b) Follow up on the recommendations of the strategic evaluation of the WFP Policy on Capacity Development (2009).¹⁸ c) Appoint a focal point within regional bureaux and country offices to support the implementation of the WFP capacity development policy. d) In partnership with other entities, develop a coordinated capacity strengthening strategy for Nigeria. 	Headquarters/(OSZ), country office
4	WFP should maintain a core strategic focus on addressing the immediate needs of affected populations in northeast Nigeria, in line with the CSP commitment to provide life-saving emergency assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clearly advocate the provision of sufficient food and nutrition assistance, in coordination with partners, to meet assessed needs. b) Provide a clear and transparent line of sight between the total number of people assessed as requiring food and nutrition assistance and WFP's own operational planning figures. c) Revise the current plans for transition to livelihood support in line with a careful contextual analysis. d) Coordinate with government, development and community partners in producing a strategy for transition from a Level 3 emergency response to livelihood support. 	Country office

¹⁸ WFP Office of Evaluation. 2017. *WFP Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2009)*. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/wfps-capacity-development-policy-policy-evaluation-terms-reference>.

No	Issue	Recommendation	Responsibility
5	WFP should appropriately promote the application of humanitarian principles and equal access to food and nutrition assistance, in line with the CSP commitment to a principled approach to gaining and maintaining humanitarian access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop and disseminate practical corporate guidance for senior field staff on the application of corporate policies on humanitarian principles and access. b) In coordination with other United Nations entities in Nigeria, contribute to training on the application of humanitarian principles. c) Complete the WFP access strategy, aligned with the Humanitarian country team access strategy. d) Define responsibilities and establish capacities for integrating humanitarian principles and access into programme operations in the Nigeria country office. 	Headquarters (OS/OSZ), regional bureau, country office
6	WFP should reinforce efforts to mainstream gender in programme activities and build partnerships to deliver on the CSP commitment to strengthen gender transformative programming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Appoint a full-time gender officer, with a clear separation of functions from protection. b) Develop a country-level gender baseline and action plan. 	Country office
7	WFP should clarify and improve its targeting approach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop a communication strategy for improving the exchange of information on targeting approaches. b) Review, revise and develop corporate policies and guidance on the targeting of food assistance, including acceptable verification thresholds and targeting errors for both inclusion and exclusion errors. 	Country office, Headquarters (VAM)

Abbreviations: OS = Operations Services Department; OSE = Emergency Preparedness and Support Response Division; OSZ = Policy and Programme Division; VAM = Vulnerability Analysis Unit.

Acronyms used in the document

CSP	country strategic plan
COMET	country office tool for managing effectively
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification