



# Evaluation of WFP corporate emergency response in northeast Nigeria (2016–18)

## CONTEXT

Nigeria has been classified as a lower-middle income economy since 2008 and Africa's largest economy in 2016. However, more than half the population lives in poverty, which is most severe in the northeast and northwest.

Since 2009, violent attacks on civilians by non-state armed groups have caused massive displacement of people in northeast Nigeria. The conflict has worsened pre-existing chronic food and nutrition insecurity. By 2016–2017, over 3 million people were classified as being in Integrated Food Security Phase 3 (crisis) to 5 (famine).

## WFP OPERATIONS

Initial capacity strengthening activities to government emergency management agencies in 2015 were followed by WFP formally establishing its presence in Nigeria in 2016. A Level 3 corporate emergency response to the crisis in the northeast had targeted some 2.1 million beneficiaries by September 2018. WFP managed common services on behalf of the humanitarian community.

## SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation covered all WFP activities in the northeast from 2016 to 2018. It assessed the appropriateness of design and delivery, operational performance and factors and quality of strategic decision-making.

Data gathering tools included a desk review, field visit to WFP operations in northeast Nigeria, 112 key informant interviews and 20 focus-group discussions with affected populations. Ethical standards were applied to ensure the dignity and confidentiality of those involved in the evaluation.

## OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation is intended for both accountability and learning purposes. It offers opportunities for corporate learning relevant to complex emergencies, and provides insights to implement WFP's first country strategic plan (CSP) 2019–2022 in Nigeria.

Other stakeholders and users include WFP senior leadership, the West Africa Regional Bureau, and Headquarters technical units. The findings will also be of interest to WFP governmental and non-governmental partners in Nigeria.

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Alignment with identified humanitarian needs and relevant national policies

The WFP response was appropriate and technically consistent with national development and emergency response policies. WFP contributed to improved assessment of needs. There was a lack of transparency, however, between assessment results and WFP operational plans.

The nutrition strategy was well-adapted to the circumstances. While an initial cash-based response was appropriate, assessment of the most appropriate delivery mechanism was inadequate. The value of in-kind and cash-based transfers, and nutrition commodities, was generally appropriate but changes to the food basket resulted in a greater burden on beneficiaries. Specific vulnerable groups were prioritized, but the type of assistance was not specifically adapted to their needs.

Risks were identified from the outset but important protection risks were not addressed in a timely way. Important opportunities for gender analysis were missed. WFP struggled to adhere to humanitarian principles.

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

For more information please contact the Office of Evaluation [wfp.evaluation@wfp.org](mailto:wfp.evaluation@wfp.org)

## Operational performance and results

Initial efforts to build national capacities showed limited progress. Once established in-country however, WFP achieved an impressive scale-up, reaching more than one million beneficiaries by January 2017. However, achievements fell somewhat short of targets, with limited available evidence of outcomes, particularly for nutrition and livelihood activities. Attention to gender was inadequate, despite some positive achievements.

The rapid scale-up affected the quality of programmes. Initial targeting and registration processes enabled WFP to quickly distribute assistance but resulted in persistent inclusion and exclusion errors. Challenges in using mobile money also persisted.

The delivery and utility of common services generally exceeded targets and the role of UNHAS was pivotal in expanding partners' access to affected people.

Analysis of the cost efficiency of WFP's operations was constrained by lack of data. Cost savings associated with changes in types of food commodities were offset by increased protection risks.

## Factors and quality of strategic decision making

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 operations in-country but the country office struggled with frequent changes in leadership and other staffing challenges. Corporately, WFP's ability to respond to five concurrent Level 3 responses through the emergency roster was stretched.

WFP made considerable efforts to establish partnerships with a diverse range of stakeholders. WFP engaged broadly with government coordination mechanisms although coordination responsibilities in Government were at times unclear. WFP missed opportunities to build Government capacity for preparedness and emergency response more holistically.

Operations were relatively well-resourced due to sharing of information on the severity of the crisis, including Nigeria as part of the "four famines" global appeal and declaring a level 3 emergency.

Humanitarian access increased considerably with WFP's operations expanding geographically from two local government areas in 2016 to 27 in 2018. Access, however, still remains heavily constrained leading to the roll-out of a humanitarian country team access strategy and civil-military coordination guidance in 2018.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall Assessment

The ability of WFP to rapidly scale up was impressive and is credibly associated with food security improvements. Effective scale-up was underpinned by the efficient recruiting of a large complement of national staff, effective supply chain and common services. WFP was slower to deliver a high-quality response, however. The complexity and scale of the food security crisis in northeast Nigeria requires multi-agency action.

There are important opportunities to strengthen coordination and partnership approaches. Increasing attention on the role of WFP in strengthening the capacity of national institutions is not yet matched by investment in staff capacities, resources or guidance. Looking forward, a more robust approach is required to ensure that beneficiaries move to government support or other sustainable livelihood opportunities. Given the continuing high rates of food insecurity and the highly unpredictable security situation, life-saving assistance is a continuing priority, for which WFP needs to advocate vigorously.

### Recommendations

The evaluation made seven recommendations for WFP:

**Recommendation 1** Enhance coverage of, and preparedness plans for, major emergencies in non-presence countries.

**Recommendation 2** Strengthen the corporate capacity to rapidly deploy experienced staff to lead and manage in-country emergency response on a sustained basis.

**Recommendation 3** Strengthen support for country offices in planning, delivering and reporting on capacity strengthening for national institutions in emergencies.

**Recommendation 4** Maintain a core strategic focus on addressing the immediate needs of affected populations in northeast Nigeria, in line with the country strategic plan commitment to provide life-saving emergency assistance.

**Recommendation 5** Appropriately promote the application of humanitarian principles and equal access to food and nutrition assistance.

**Recommendation 6** Reinforce efforts to mainstream gender within the Nigeria programme; and build partnerships to strengthen gender transformative programming.

**Recommendation 7** Clarify and improve WFP's targeting approach.