

# Evaluation Brief

*Decentralized evaluation for evidence-based decision making*

## World Food Programme McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Liberia (2013-2016)

### SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The Government of Liberia is carrying out a school meals programme in food insecure regions of Liberia since 1969 in order to encourage learning and students' enrolment. This program was disrupted by 14 years (1989-2003) of civil war while being implemented through an emergency fund. In 2009, the program was awarded a funding of the United States Department of Agriculture to continue and scale up the implementation of the school meal activities under the leadership of WFP, the implementing partner. Between 2013 and 2016, WFP was granted \$20 million by USDA for the following program activities: distribution of school meals to pre-primary and primary public school children; distribution of monthly take home rations to girls of grades 4, 5 and 6; enhancement of government capacities to sustainably manage and expand the program; the development of policy documents on school feeding (SF); the implementation of a home grown school feeding project. Under the WFP-USDA agreement, WFP has committed to conduct a final evaluation in order to measure overall performance and impact of the programme. As such a final evaluation was initiated as of February 2017.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The main objective of this evaluation was to assess performance and results achieved by the program in Liberia between september 2013 and september 2016. Due to an outbreak of the Ebola Virus disease (EVD) in 2014, a midline evaluation that was planned was canceled. Therefore, this final evaluation relies on baseline data

conducted in 2013 and 2014 and on outcome monitoring missions conducted in 2014 and 2015.

### METHODOLOGY

The Evaluation Team (ET) used a mixed methods approach, with significant primary qualitative data collection to triangulate or replace the limited quantitative data available in country. The evaluation used the international evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

### KEY FINDINGS

#### Relevance

Overall, the evaluation found that the SF programme is highly relevant to the liberian context. The objectives align well with the national policy framework and with key WFP policies and strategies. Geographic and school selection criteria were clear. However, better adherence to the school selection criteria would have improved the 2016 scale-up.

Coverage of SF in counties is between 20-27 percent of national schools leading to a potentially negative pull factor of students into schools and increasing class sizes. The ET found the choice of modalities of food assistance employed and the rations to be appropriate for the context and culture. However, the 2016 scale up could have considered the Girls Take Home Ration (GTHR) as an activity to utilize stockpiled commodities. Gender sensitivity including sex disaggregation of data is used appropriately.

#### Effectiveness

Overall, the ET found that some aspects of the programme have been effective such as

policy support, while others need some more strategic thought such as capacity development. The evaluation of the effectiveness was difficult due to a lack of outcome monitoring data as only 18 of the 30 MGD indicators were tracked and school closures further limited data availability. However, all consulted stakeholders considered that the SF programme increased school attendance and improved gender parity. The data collected as part of the evaluation showed increased enrolment over the previous two years.

### Efficiency

The commodity management and logistics systems of WFP have been efficient. The WFP logistics system resulted in provision of food to schools in a timely manner and a strong pipeline was maintained throughout the programme, with a good record for delivery. The CO also provided strong management and flexibility during the EVD outbreak, negotiating a transfer of food commodities to the emergency response programme in a timely fashion. The GTHR offers higher levels of cost-effectiveness and quantitatively more advantageous to children than the hot meals. Given SF programme coverage within counties is low (20-28 percent), it reduces efficiency, cost-effectiveness and makes it harder to build capacity, knowledge and ownership by the County education offices.

### Impact

It was not possible to evaluate the impacts due to the short time frame shortened further by the EVD crisis; the lack of outcome, impact and trend data. Given literacy indicators were not included in the baseline survey nor in any monitoring activity it was not possible to evaluate the occurred changes in this regard. The ET found that the SF is an important factor in increasing school enrolment and attendance; in offering an economic transfer to families and that it is likely that the SF programme contributes positively to household food security, particularly for the families of girls receiving GTHR. However, none of these outcomes are monitored. The partnership between WFP and the Government of Liberia appears to be one of donor and recipient, rather than partners following an agreed timetable for handover.

### Sustainability

Although some milestones have been achieved in supporting the Government to take ownership, many challenges remain for a full ownership and implementation of the programme. The main constraints are the lack of a budget line with regards

to SF in the national budget and the poor representation of SF in County Development Plans. The Government financial contributions to the programme fell over the evaluation period from 60 to 19 percent. The tasks assigned to the Ministry of Education (MoE), such as monitoring and reporting, have not all been occurring but have been re-stated year on year in the Joint Plan of Action (JPA). The situation is hampered by the lack of a clear and agreed operational framework aimed at transitioning over to the government. A further external challenge is the high MoE staff turnover that undermines WFP's capacity development efforts.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall Assessment

Overall, the ET found that the SF programme is highly relevant to the Liberian context. However, the implementation of the SF programme was significantly affected by the outbreak of EVD in July 2014. While the commodity management and logistics systems of WFP have been efficient there remain some challenges regarding sustainability.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this evaluation, the recommendations of the ET are outlined below.

**R 1:** Develop a clear capacity development strategy to support the handover of the programme to the Government.

**R 2:** Develop a clear operational framework and timeline for the transition of the programme to the Government.

**R 3:** Review the capacity to implement the new SF Operational Framework and the new Capacity Development Strategy.

**R 4:** Strengthen collaborations and develop new partnerships with other development and community actors.

**R 5:** Expand the GTHR to all primary school grades in areas where there is a high gender disparity in primary school enrolment.

**R 6:** The WFP Regional Bureau in Dakar must provide ongoing support to the CO to develop a more transparent and gender responsive M&E system and ensure that monitoring and evaluation activities are appropriate, systematic and as per donor agreements.

**R 7:** The CO should consider increasing the coverage of the programme within counties to improve multiple efficiencies including capacity building.