



Evaluation of Timor-Leste WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2020

CONTEXT

Timor-Leste is one of the world's newest states. It has a population of 1.4 million people and is classed as a lower-middle-income country.¹ Its economy is highly dependent on oil, which accounts for 48 percent of gross domestic product.² Timor-Leste faces severe malnutrition challenges with only approximately 25 percent of the population considered food secure. Its Strategic Development Plan (2011- 2030) guides development efforts and reflects its commitment to state-building, social inclusion and economic growth. However, converting policies into action has been challenged by several years of instability in government.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The Timor-Leste Strategic Plan (CSP) Evaluation covers WFP activities implemented from January 2015 to August 2019, assessing both the earlier Country Programme (CP) and the Country Strategic Plan (2018-2020). The CSP had two strategic outcomes focused on improved nutrition for children under five, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women and, increased capacity of national and sub-national government institutions to sustainably deliver food, nutrition and supply chain related services. The total budget was US \$ 16.9 million of which 30 percent was funded as of January 2020.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the independent Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next WFP CSP in Timor-Leste.

It was conducted between September 2019 and April 2020 to assess WFP's strategic positioning and role and the extent to which WFP has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP; WFP's contributions to outcomes; efficiency; and the factors that explain WFP performance.

The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Timor-Leste Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Timor-Leste, and other partners.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

WFP's strategic position and alignment to country priorities.

The CSP was aligned with national policies on food and nutrition security. It focused on nutrition specific elements such as Moderate and Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) with limited preventive activities beyond behaviour change and no clear linkages with nutrition sensitive interventions. While partnerships were recognized as 'central', the CSP did not focus on the strategic role of partners in leveraging WFP's own efforts and in ensuring a more multisectoral approach to malnutrition.

The Country Office (CO) collaborated with a number of United Nations agencies including UNICEF on MAM, the WHO on child and adolescent health, and FAO on food security coordination. However, United Nations System wide coherence with the government was not fully achieved. This was partly due to frequent changes in the government, but also to a lack of mechanisms for regular dialogue and accountability.³

Extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes

Targeted supplementary food assistance: While targets for training, and the number of people exposed to nutrition messaging, were met or exceeded the CSP did not reach its targets for provision of fortified and specialized nutritious foods in 2018 and 2019. Both these Targeted Support Feeding Programme (TSFP) elements were severely underfunded.

¹ World Bank, 2019. Data: Timor-Leste. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/timor-leste> [accessed 8 November 2019].

² Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, 2017. *Reconciliation report. Timor-Leste extractive industries.*

³ United Nations, 2019. *United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2015-2020 in Timor-Leste, Evaluation Report.* Dili: United Nations, page 47.

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

At outcome level, performance data showed challenges in relation to MAM treatment default and recovery rates, as well as child coverage. Larger proportions of MAM patients defaulted from both treatment and recovery than planned.

Strengthening of national capacities to sustainably deliver food, nutrition and supply chain services.

Target achievement at the output level varied greatly, with indicators mainly focused on training events and the provision of technical assistance, thus not reflecting the full spectrum of WFP engagement in the country. In fact, successful advocacy of government funding for nutrition supplies was an achievement not captured by the results framework.

A rice fortification pilot study led to the formation of a technical Working Group under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the drafting of a law on food fortification.

The 'Fill the Nutrient Gap' study built awareness of key nutrition issues and was used to inform the 2019 UN Common Country Analysis.

Systems and procedures of the medical supply chain were strengthened at central level, but WFP underestimated the scale of the challenge in terms of the depth, quality, and duration of the structural and procedural changes needed, and the skills that WFP staff required.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. WFP made notable progress in generating evidence of, and advocating attention to, the nutrition needs of adolescent girls. However, more women than men were reached by nutrition messages suggesting that there is a need for further outreach to men and boys.

Sustainability There are technical and financial challenges to sustainability, mainly concerning handover of the TSFP coordination functions from WFP to the Ministry of Health. The resources provided for TSFP were insufficient, capacity strengthening is yet to be consolidated, and facilities were struggling with reduced quantities, and regularity of distribution of supplies at the field level.

Efficient use of resources

Cost-effectiveness of the TSFP increased under the CSP and compares favorably to similar interventions in other countries and regions. For recovered children under five the average cost was reduced from US \$ 52.3 to 22.9 and for recovered Pregnant and Lactating Women from US \$ 41.7 to 16.2.

Funding challenges created pipeline breaks affecting procurement and food deliveries which in turn reduced attendance levels in health facilities. The target beneficiaries for TSFP were 72,000 but by 2018 only 13,660 of the planned 48,100 beneficiaries for the year

had been reached, though in 2019 the annual target of 24,050 was surpassed with 26,321 beneficiaries reached. Lack of resources also resulted in downscaling territorial coverage.

Factors that explain WFP performance

The lack of adequate, predictable and flexible funding resulted in the CO having to sacrifice medium- and long-term planning while frequently adjusting operations to available funds. Through 2019, the office experienced severe liquidity constraints and was only able to operate based on advances from Headquarters. The key partnerships were those with ministries. Effective partnerships depended on availability of funding and human resources capacity in WFP and the partner ministry. The CO lacked staff expertise and seniority to engage at the policy level and to build partnerships. The use of monitoring data for result based management was strong while WFP was directly engaged in the TSFP but limited in other areas such as capacity strengthening.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Achieving the major institutional restructuring set out by the Integrated Road Map and the associated shift from *delivering to enabling* requires a period of time going beyond the CSP cycle evaluated. The CO is at a transitional stage when many of its operational structures, procedures, staffing and skills still reflect the earlier reality. The evaluation identified benefits from increased collaboration between WFP and the government as well as other United Nations organizations to strengthen CSP implementation.

Recommendations

The evaluation made four recommendations for WFP:

Recommendation 1. Ensure a threshold of sustainable and predictable funding to guarantee a stable minimum core team in the CO.

Recommendation 2. Build a closer, more focused relationship with the government and other United Nations agencies.

Recommendation 3. Build on established WFP strengths in the following areas: focused elements of a multisectoral gender sensitive nutrition strategy; vulnerability analysis; school feeding, developing a strong advisory support role and focused elements of food systems development.

Recommendation 4. Reappraise and reinforce WFP's approach and methods for capacity strengthening.