



# Evaluation of Democratic Republic of the Congo WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan 2018-2020

## CONTEXT

Due to decades of poor governance and conflict, the country is marked by situations of extreme fragility. Development indicators remain extremely low and an estimated 15.6 million people were food insecure in 2019, including 4.6 million children.

## SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

This Country Strategic Plan (CSP) evaluation covers WFP strategy, interventions and systems in DRC between 2017 and 2019. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the second largest country in Africa, endowed with incomparable natural resources and a young, highly diverse and fast-growing population of 84 million. Agriculture employs 70% of the population but the vast majority are subsistence farmers with limited access to productive inputs, markets and technical know-how.

The interim CSP focussed on five strategic outcomes: i) meeting basic food requirements in crisis; ii) improving nutrition status; iii) enhancing productive livelihoods and resilience; iv) strengthening national capacity to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition and respond to shocks; and v) supporting the humanitarian community.

The required budget for the ICSP was estimated at USD 1.19 billion of which USD 525 million were disbursed over the first two years of the three-year ICSP.

## OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the independent Office of Evaluation (OEV) to serve the dual purposes of accountability and learning to inform the preparation of the new CSP for DRC. It was conducted between October 2019 and March 2020 to assess WFP's strategic positioning and role and the extent to which WFP has made the strategic shift expected by the interim CSP; WFP's contributions to strategic outcomes;

efficiency; and the factors that explain WFP performance.

The main stakeholders and users of the evaluation are the WFP Country Office, the Regional Bureau in Johannesburg, Headquarters technical divisions, the Government of DRC, and other partners.

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

### **WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities, people's needs and WFP's strengths**

Over the period 2018-2019 WFP successfully expanded its emergency assistance in response to a growing number of crises in an extremely challenging environment. Food assistance was well-targeted on areas affected by conflict or other shocks.

WFP showed an ability to remain flexible and respond to new crises, as evidenced by its response to the Ebola crisis.

WFP interventions were well grounded in the United Nations common assessments and plans, and carried out in partnership with, among others, UNHCR, UNICEF and FAO.

### **WFP's contribution to interim CSP strategic outcomes**

The number of beneficiaries reached increased consistently from 2017 to 2019 and was around 90 percent of target, but varied by strategic outcome. The vast majority of beneficiaries received life-saving food assistance during crises, while achievement of longer-term, sustainable change was more limited.

**Food security in crisis:** WFP provided in-kind food and, increasingly, cash-based transfers to people affected by conflict and other crises. Increasing beneficiary targets were largely met, but the total value of transfers was markedly below planned as rations were selectively reduced in the face of gaps and delays in resource availability. WFP likely helped reduce food insecurity in areas affected by crisis.

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

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**Nutrition:** WFP mainly supported treatment of moderate acute malnutrition through targeted supplementary feeding, and there was a significant improvement in reaching beneficiary targets. However, acute and chronic malnutrition prevention was underresourced.

**Resilience:** WFP provided technical assistance to smallholder farmer organizations through purchase for progress and food assistance for assets and training. Resilience activities were deprioritized compared to emergency assistance, but renewed funding allowed for an increase in activities, partly linked to an expanding home-grown school feeding programme.

**Government capacity strengthening:** Activities were limited to training government staff on food security monitoring and early warning and, in North Kivu, on disaster preparedness.

**Support to the humanitarian community:** WFP effectively supported humanitarian supply chains and tele-communications, led the logistics cluster and provided transport and storage services. UNHAS also performed well, demonstrating vital flexibility in scaling up services in response to the Ebola emergency.

**Cross-cutting issues:** While some key measures were put in place to enhance protection of WFP target groups, there was a lack of risk analysis, monitoring and budget for this purpose. Efforts to ensure accountability to affected populations also gained momentum, but complaints were often not addressed in time.

Gender equality and women empowerment were well integrated in resilience activities and likely to improve women's socio-economic status, however sick people and people with disabilities tended to be left behind in those activities.

### **WFP's efficient use of resources in contributing to CSP outputs and strategic outcomes**

Despite consistent efforts to ensure timely delivery of assistance, WFP was affected by significant delays on the ground, due to a lack of timely funding and logistics challenges with at times severe consequences on affected populations.

WFP took several successful measures to keep costs in check, such as selection of appropriate assistance modalities based on operational costs and market analyses; introduction of the SCOPE beneficiary registration system to eliminate multiple registrations; reduction of transport costs; and pooling of resources with other UN agencies.

### **Factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the interim CSP**

The ICSP has provided WFP a single frame of reference for dialogue with its donors, who have responded with funding in line with the increased needs. At the same time, donor

earmarking of funding has remained significant, limiting WFP's flexibility and reaction time.

The ICSP did not lead to a significant shift in partnerships. WFP did not maintain strong political links with the national government, and partnerships with cooperating partners could have been more strategic.

WFP operations in DRC are highly decentralised but monitoring and reporting systems are ineffective in supporting decision making and adaptation. Measures are being taken to strengthen capacity and processes to better manage fraud and security risks.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overall Assessment**

Thanks to its strong capabilities in assessments, food assistance, supply chain and fund raising WFP has been able to respond to consecutive and increasing emergencies in DRC, but the growing food assistance needs were only partially met due to funding constraints.

WFP's operations appear at times stretched to the limit because of staffing gaps and inadequate systems for internal monitoring and risk management commensurate with the scale of operations and the setting.

There is also room for building more strategic partnerships to better integrate resilience and peacebuilding into WFP assistance, so that WFP can make a larger contribution to addressing structural food security and nutrition vulnerabilities in DRC.

**Recommendation 1.** Upgrade WFP's emergency response capacity, through greater coverage of food security assessments, increased timeliness of response and better adaptation of assistance modalities to beneficiaries' needs.

**Recommendation 2.** Mobilize WFP's comparative advantages to support partners engaged in the development and peacebuilding components of the Triple Nexus.

**Recommendation 3.** Engage more strategically with donors, the Government and cooperating partners.

**Recommendation 4.** Strengthen monitoring and evaluation and internal management and control systems for reducing risks to operations.

**Recommendation 5.** Group protection, risk of exclusion, environmental protection, conflict sensitivity and accountability to affected populations into a single 'risk to populations' framework and give them adequate attention.

**Recommendation 6.** Increase the focus on gender through greater attention to the concerns of women, men, boys and girls in the more vulnerable population groups, and better use of opportunities presented by programming.