



Evaluation of Bangladesh WFP Country Strategic Plan 2016-2019

CONTEXT

Bangladesh is a lower middle-income country with a population of some 163 million, exposed to frequent risk of natural disasters and refugee influxes from Myanmar. Rapid economic growth is coupled with persistent geographical disparities in income, food security, education and gender equality.

Despite steady progress in improving child nutrition, many children suffer from micronutrient deficiencies and stunting.

The Government of Bangladesh has a strong national policy environment for development, social protection, climate change, gender and nutrition.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The Bangladesh Country Strategic Plan (CSP) Evaluation covers WFP activities implemented from January 2016 to December 2019, assessing both operations prior to the CSP in 2016, as well as CSP implementation.

The CSP focuses on five strategic outcomes: i) improved national nutrition indicators; ii) enhanced food security and nutrition of disaster-affected people; iii) enhanced resilience to climate-related shocks; iv) strengthened national humanitarian response capacity; and v) reliable common services.

The total budget for the CSP was USD 969 million, of which 60 percent was funded in 2019.

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 Bangladesh.

It was conducted between October 2019 and September 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 strategic outcomes; efficiency; factors that explain WFP performance; and the appropriateness of the Level 3 response to the Rohingya crisis.

The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Bangladesh Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Bangladesh, and other

partners.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

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

The evaluation found that the overall performance of the country strategic plan is broadly aligned with its stated outcomes and objectives and consistent with national policies and humanitarian interventions in Bangladesh.

The country office was effective in responding to expanded needs in the country although it did not pay adequate attention to exclusion or inclusion based on gender, disability or other factors.

The approach to increasing the coverage and scale of interventions with the Government was broadly successful, resulting in expanded coverage of a range of national programmes.

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

WFP made progress in delivering its strategic outcomes, although some activities progressed more than others. However, WFP was unable to fully capture the results of its interventions or their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Progress was slow in 2017 as country strategic plan systems were being established, at the same time as the Level 3 response to the Rohingya refugee crisis was being scaled up.

Strategic outcome 5 was a successful addition to the country strategic plan that enabled WFP to provide the humanitarian community with access to reliable common services.

Emergency response: The food security and nutrition of disaster-affected people, including refugees, was enhanced due to the delivery of large assistance packages. Government capacity to prepare for and respond to emergencies was strengthened, with the establishment of the national logistics cluster, an emergency operational dashboard and simulation exercises.

Innovation: Despite challenges, the country office successfully piloted new approaches such as the forecast-based financing mechanism.

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

Gender, protection, and accountability to affected

populations: Despite a high level of awareness and commitment to these priority areas, country-office wide strategic approaches were limited, partly due to lack of financial and human resources, and corporate guidance.

Sustainability: Efforts to forge linkages between emergency response and long-term resilience have been made. However more strategic-level relationship building is needed to achieve the institutional take-up of interventions by the Government and other partners.

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

WFP struggled to maintain a resource mobilization strategy yielding sufficient and flexible resources to finance the entire country strategic plan. Earmarking of donor contributions resulted in underfunding of some development activities.

Supply chain and logistics services were efficient and cost-effective, rapidly providing a high volume of food and non-food items.

Managing staff capacities to implement the country strategic plan while adapting human resource needs to respond to the Rohingya crisis presented challenges, and did not provide the necessary expertise to enable the shift to institutional capacity strengthening envisaged by the CSP.

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

Use of evidence: The CSP was informed by a 2106 strategic review, and other internal and external evidence. The use of data to improve performance however was not optimal.

Partnerships: WFP engagement with a wide range of partners positively influenced performance. A whole-of-society approach was adopted through partnerships with local non-governmental organizations. More strategic engagement with a wider range of Government ministries would expand reach and coverage, and pursue WFP's dual humanitarian and development mandate.

Capacity Strengthening: WFP's institutional ability to strategically shift to capacity strengthening has been inconsistent and focused primarily on training. Greater engagement in broader policy discussions, such as nutrition sensitive social safety nets, is required.

WFP response to the Level 3 emergency in the context of a CSP

The scale, speed and coverage of the WFP response to the Rohingya refugee crisis was impressive, reaching 880,000 refugees by end-2019.

WFP sustained strong leadership in the food security, logistics and emergency telecommunications sectors, contributing to a coordinated humanitarian response.

Updating the CSP with an additional strategic outcome for the Level 3 emergency response was a pragmatic and effective solution for an appropriate and rapid scale-up; however, the Level 3 response was largely delinked from other WFP activities in the country.

The WFP approach to gender, accountability and inclusion in the L3 was commended. The shift from in-kind provision to e-vouchers entails potential PSEA risks that remain a concern.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WFP was effective in responding to the expansion of needs in the country, although the shift to the Level 3 response contributed to a disruption in the strategic direction of the CSP.

Despite best efforts, there are clear challenges to WFP's ability to make an organizational shift to institutional capacity strengthening. Elements including staff expertise, flexible funding, broader engagement with government would need adjustment to achieve successful institutional capacity strengthening.

Clearer linkages between CSP activities and outcomes would enable WFP to fully capture its contribution to progress on the various SDGs. Operational focus on cross-cutting areas (gender, protection, inclusion) requires more effort to mainstream across all outcomes.

The evaluation concludes that WFP has effective, fast response mechanisms in place and is well placed to continue in its trusted role, while supporting and strengthening national development programmes to mitigate the long-term impact of disasters on vulnerable groups.

For the next CSP WFP may need to reprioritize to engage strategically in national nutrition-sensitive social safety nets.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Enhance strategic partnerships

Recommendation 2: Improve the effectiveness of emergency preparedness, readiness and response mechanisms

Recommendation 3: Strengthen support for nutrition-sensitive social safety net programmes

Recommendation 4: Enhance capacity strengthening strategy and interventions

Recommendation 5: Strengthen gender equality and social inclusion interventions

Recommendation 6: Strengthen performance management strategy, processes and systems