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Comoros Annual Country Report 2020

Country Strategic Plan
2019 - 2020



World Food
Programme

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2020 Overview

Comoros has witnessed slow yet encouraging positive trends in its poverty reduction and social development in recent years. Its narrow economic base, however, has continued to be marked by sensitivity and vulnerability to climate shocks, such as natural hazards, as underscored during the wake of Cyclone Kenneth in 2019. The Category 3 cyclone — one of the most powerful cyclones to ever hit the African continent — made landfall in the Comoros archipelago in April 2019, resulting in population displacement, and severe damage to infrastructure and livelihoods. The cyclone destroyed four-fifths of the agricultural farms, which is the economic backbone of the country. As a result of the devastation, an estimated 185,000 people (more than 21 percent of the country's population) required emergency food assistance.

As Comoros continued with its post-cyclone rehabilitation commitments in 2020, the country's recovery remained fragile and vulnerable. During the year, it had to grapple with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated containment measures on the economy and social fabric as it tightened its grip on the country, as well as around the world. While the severity of the impact of the pandemic is yet to be determined, the macroeconomic prospects for Comoros is far from rosy, threatening to offset post-cyclone reconstruction efforts. The economy is expected to sharply contract due to the downturn in agriculture, trade, and tourism. The predicted fall in diaspora remittances would disproportionately affect households' purchasing power, aggravating the situation of the already economically vulnerable population.

Despite having no official presence in Comoros, WFP was at the forefront of the Cyclone Kenneth response, following the Government's request for urgent multi-sectoral assistance due to the onslaught of the cyclone. WFP launched a Limited Emergency Operation (LEO) in Comoros in May 2019, focusing on two strategic outcomes: to safeguard the access to food of crisis-affected populations, and to provide technical assistance to national disaster management agencies and local partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacities.

WFP's emergency food assistance was completed in 2019, reaching 33,108 cyclone-affected people, of whom 64 percent were women and girls. WFP built synergies with the Comoros Red Crescent, national disaster management agencies, and local authorities in implementing food assistance throughout the response, from beneficiary targeting to distribution to monitoring. WFP also strengthened the skills of partners in various aspects of food distribution and logistics, and provided supplementary trainings in gender mainstreaming, and protection of people with special needs and disabilities.

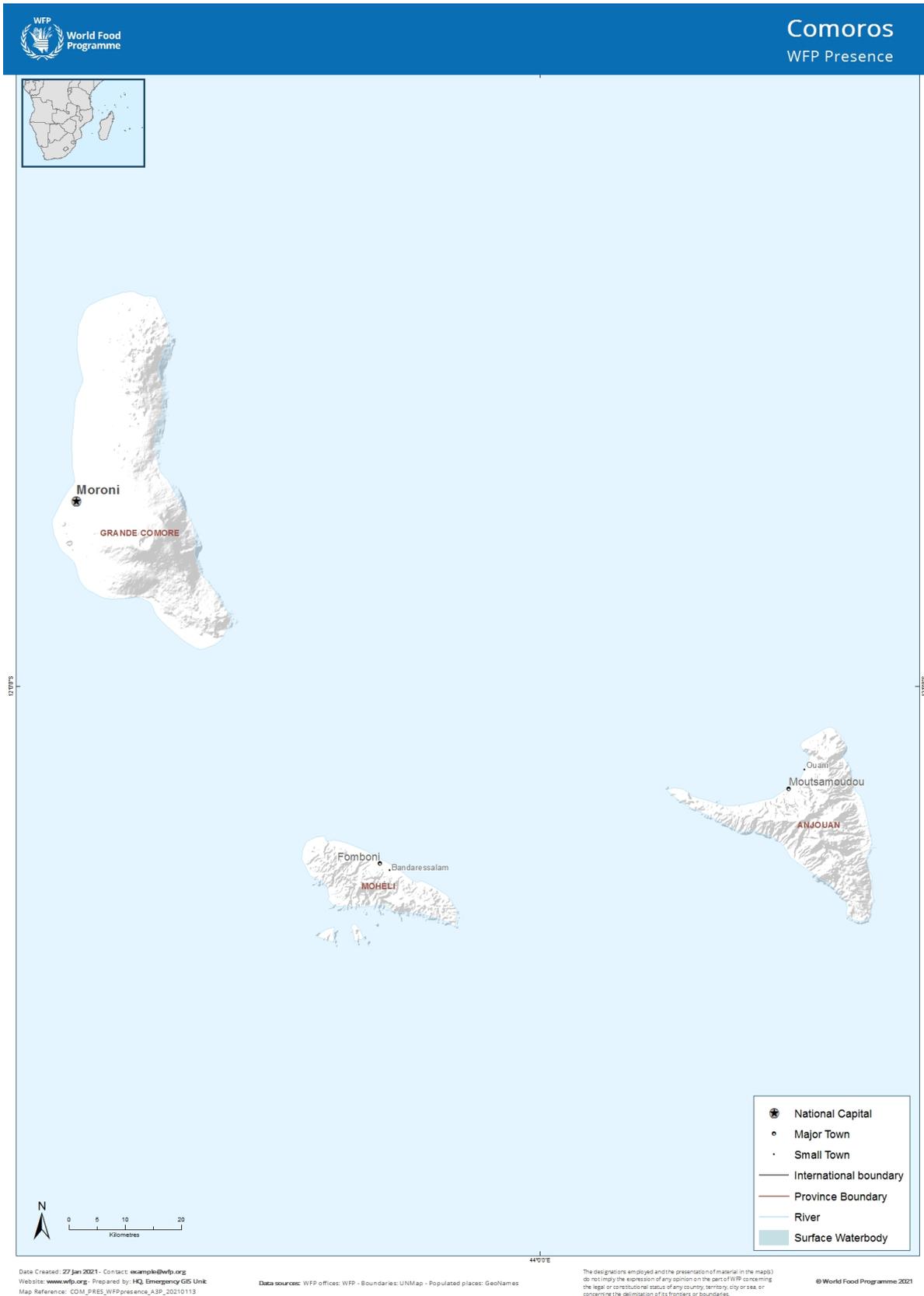
In 2020, WFP's activities focused on capacity strengthening with the national disaster management agencies and local partners to enhance institutional and adaptive capacities in emergency preparedness and response, particularly in areas of food distribution, logistics coordination, supply chain management, and food security analysis. The activities drew on key learnings from the cyclone emergency, which identified capacity-strengthening gaps, bottlenecks and challenges during the response. The lessons learned exercise was led by the General Directorate of Civil Protection (*Direction Générale de la Sécurité Civile* or DGSC) and attended by staff from the Government, UN, non-governmental organization, and partners.

WFP implemented its activities in Comoros against the backdrop of limited funding resources and changing humanitarian context due to the ongoing health crisis that generated additional vulnerabilities and risks. Nevertheless, WFP made several headways in areas of emergency preparedness and response. In strategic partnerships between WFP and the DGSC, WFP worked to augment national logistics response capacity by strengthening the existing government-led coordination and support mechanisms through trainings and other support activities. These included the repair of a government warehouse for storage of relief supplies and establishment of a community-based early warning system, empowering communities threatened by shocks to respond in sufficient time and in an appropriate manner. Together with UN agencies and other partners, WFP also supported the Government in developing a multi-sectoral COVID-19 plan.

WFP's activities in Comoros in 2019–2020 contributed to the priorities in national development policies such as the Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCA2D), which is aligned with the Government's Emerging Comoros Plan for 2030. Despite having no official presence in Comoros, WFP continues to monitor developments in the country and stands ready to provide assistance when needed, especially in light of the changing context, including the prevailing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Context and operations & COVID-19 response



Comoros (officially the Union of Comoros) has made important strides towards economic recovery and social development in recent years, including a steady rise in its Human Development Index value since 2000[1] and declining poverty incidence since 2004.[2] Despite its progress, the country's economic growth has continued to underperform its regional peers and remained lower than the sub-Saharan Africa average.[3] Its youthful and growing population (around 850,900 in 2019) has outpaced its economic growth[4], crippling the effective provision of essential social services. In April 2019, Cyclone Kenneth — one of the worst cyclones to ever hit mainland Africa — wrought devastation



to a large swath of the Comoros archipelago, resulting in economic destruction equivalent to 12.5 percent of its gross domestic product.[5] The COVID-19 health crisis that unfolded in 2020 is threatening to reverse post-cyclone reconstruction efforts as well as impede the country's economic agenda and development trajectory.

Around four out of ten Comorians live below the national basic needs poverty line of KMF 25,341 (USD 62.4) per capita per month, and nearly one-fourth of the population is in a state of extreme poverty.[6] At least 27 percent of the poor and 29 percent of the extreme poor represent households headed by women.[7] Prevalence of chronic malnutrition (stunting) also remained an issue of public concern, affecting 31.1 percent of children under five, higher than the average for Southern Africa (30.4 percent).[8]

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for half the poor, thereby exposing the country to climactic, environmental, and economic shocks. The onslaught of Cyclone Kenneth in 2019, which destroyed four-fifths of agriculture, has brought to the fore the country's vulnerability to extreme weather events, as well as the country's weak institutional framework and adaptive capacity in disaster preparedness and response. Assessments by the Government and the United Nations revealed that in addition to the severe damage to local infrastructure and livelihoods, Cyclone Kenneth left an estimated 185,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Following an official request for assistance from the Government of Comoros in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth, WFP mounted a Limited Emergency Operation (LEO) in May 2019, focusing on two strategic outcomes. Strategic Outcome 1 aimed to provide immediate food assistance to crisis-affected populations and related capacity-strengthening activities for partners. Strategic Outcome 2 sought to provide technical assistance to national disaster management agencies and local partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacities. As WFP did not have an operational presence in Comoros, it partnered with the Comoros Red Crescent Society (CoRC) to deliver on these strategic outcomes.

The emergency operation was initially planned to conclude in November 2019 but was extended until May 2020, following a lessons learned exercise that underscored the need for additional capacity-strengthening activities in disaster preparedness and response. The extension also facilitated a transition and handover of activities to the Government. The first phase of the response (May–September 2019) reached 33,108 of the most vulnerable people with food assistance, 64 percent of whom were women and girls. Thereafter, WFP transitioned into a capacity-strengthening phase (November 2019–May 2020) to support the Government and partners in responding to future emergencies and optimise food security programming.

WFP's humanitarian intervention in Comoros reflected relevant priorities in national development policies, including the Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCA2D), which is aligned with the Government's Emerging Comoros Plan for 2030. The strategy sets the conditions for promoting growth and improving living conditions of the population, including bolstering national institutional capacities in disaster prevention and post-disaster intervention.

COVID-19 Response

While still reeling from the devastating impact of Cyclone Kenneth, the COVID-19 pandemic gained a foothold in Comoros in April 2020. The Global Health Security Index ranked Comoros 160 among 195 countries worldwide, indicating it is among the least prepared countries to face an epidemic or pandemic.[9] The residual impact of the cyclone, coupled with the ongoing pandemic, has exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic challenges in the country. The inevitable slowdown of economic activity due to social distancing measures, disruption to trade and tourism, and drop of remittances from the Comorian diaspora, is expected to substantially affect households' income, especially the poorer ones.

Prior to the first confirmed case in the country, the Government took decisive actions in a bid to curtail the outbreak while enhancing its social protection response. A Permanent Executive Committee was created in March to coordinate the preparedness and response on healthcare, logistics, fundraising, and data collection. In April, the National COVID-19 Pandemic Coordination Committee was established, with sub-committees on logistics, communication, security, economic support, administrative and financial, and scientific matters. Moreover, a national plan was developed and adopted to serve as a framework for the National Committee. The goal was to reinforce preparation capabilities, including an alert and response system on the outbreak. Meanwhile, the Government's health policy focused on optimising the prevention, response, and care measures through border surveillance, raising public awareness of the pandemic, compliance with preventive measures, and care for infected persons.[10]

Given the limited national capacity in crisis response, WFP, together with UN agencies and other partners, supported the Government in developing and implementing its COVID-19 multi-sectoral plan. Strategically linked to its readiness strategy, WFP provided emergency preparedness and response trainings for staff from the General Directorate of Civil Protection (*Direction Générale de la Sécurité Civile* or DGSC) to equip them with knowledge and skills to help fulfil DGSC's leading role in responding to emergencies. The training was conducted virtually, although a simulation exercise was cancelled in adherence to mobility restrictions. Furthermore, WFP provided the Government with four mobile storage



units for repositioning of humanitarian items in hard-to-reach areas where people need food assistance, as well as two generators to help build up response capacities.

It is envisaged that the Government will continue to require additional support in conducting an emergency food security assessment to fully gauge the impact of the pandemic on the food security in the country. WFP will continue to monitor the developments and coordinate with the Government if the situation warrants.

Risk Management

Throughout the course of the emergency operation, WFP assessed and monitored previously identified risks as well as emerging and potential ones to enable adaptive management and informed decisions by ensuring the activities remain effective and relevant, and that resources are appropriately allocated.

Within the programme area, the main strategic risk that WFP encountered was the lack of resources to implement the full range of its planned activities. As Cyclone Kenneth also impacted neighbouring countries and the scale of operation was larger (such as in Mozambique), this affected fundraising efforts for the Comoros operation. To mitigate this risk and in the absence of forecast contributions, WFP utilised its internal advanced financing mechanism, the Immediate Response Account (IRA), enabling WFP to immediately launch the emergency operation. WFP also advocated for funding and successfully received grant allocations from the UN Central Emergency Fund (CERF) through a rapid response window, allowing WFP to implement additional food assistance and capacity-strengthening activities for the Government and local partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated containment measures also presented strategic and operational risks to WFP during the year. The movement restrictions, including international travel bans and social gathering protocols, hindered the implementation of some of the planned activities and therefore affected the achievement of expected objectives. WFP adjusted its plans by conducting some of the trainings remotely and virtually instead of in-person. Some of the related simulation exercises were also cancelled in adherence to gathering limits and to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

WFP has initially identified operational risks relating to the high turnover of government staff, which could negatively affect the implementation of the activities. To mitigate this, WFP invested in learning and development sessions with additional government employees involved in the activities to promote commitment and participation.

Partnerships

Despite having no operational presence in Comoros, WFP was requested by the Government to be its strategic partner for the implementation of emergency food assistance and capacity-strengthening activities, especially in areas of logistics coordination, supply chain management, and food security assessments.

Coordination at the national level was achieved through the Resident Coordinator Office, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), other United Nations (UN) agencies, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) through the Comoros Red Crescent Society (CoRC), and the national-level government under the leadership of the Centre for Relief Operations and Civil Protection (COSEP) to ensure complementarity of assistance through joint and parallel activities for better programming and outcomes. With limited capacity of partners on the ground and no established cluster system in Comoros, the UN Country Team assisted the Government in the preparedness and rapid assessment activities, including inter-sectoral coordination between national authorities and humanitarian actors.

During the initial phase of the response in 2019, WFP's partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was strategic not only for the collaboration in the in-depth agriculture and food security assessment — which became the basis for the humanitarian response and logistical needs — but also for the joint and complementary support for the targeted beneficiaries. WFP provided emergency food assistance to the most affected-households, while FAO assisted the same beneficiaries with livelihood support activities.

For beneficiary targeting and food distributions in 2019, WFP worked with CoRC as its cooperating partner, leveraging its established presence in the affected areas. To ensure that CoRC staff and volunteers could adequately deliver the food assistance, WFP strengthened partner capacity through module and on-the-job trainings, mentoring, and tutoring. Training sessions on warehouse and food stock management involved 15 CoRC staff and volunteers. Meanwhile, training sessions in beneficiary identification and targeting, management of the distribution cycle and site organization, gender mainstreaming, and protection of people with special needs and disabilities, benefitted some 50 CoRC supervisors and volunteers.

Based on key learnings from the activities in 2019, the Government and partners recognized WFP's expertise in logistics coordination, supply chain management and food security analysis, and recommended an extension of the activities for another six months until May 2020. WFP capitalised on its comparative advantages in these areas and continued working with various government entities, including the Ministry of Interior (through COSEP), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment, Territory and Urban Planning, as well as local partners to support disaster risk reduction interventions.

CSP Financial Overview

The scale of the impact of Cyclone Kenneth and the resulting humanitarian response in Comoros and in neighbouring countries have contributed to funding challenges for the humanitarian community. WFP's Limited Emergency Operation (LEO) in Comoros managed to secure USD 1.53 million, representing 17 percent of the overall needs-based plan and the implementation plan valued at USD 9.1 million. Initially designed as a six-month operation until November 2019, the LEO underwent a no-cost extension until May 2020. The extension emanated from consultations and a lessons learned exercise with stakeholders, which underscored the need to continue capacity-strengthening activities and technical assistance to the Government and local partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacities. Additionally, the continuation of the activities aimed to support communities in addressing food security and nutrition challenges, enhance evidence-based programming, and support the nutrition and gender-sensitive self-reliance approach.

All of the resources were received in 2019. WFP leveraged its internal advance financing facility, obtaining USD 1 million through the Immediate Response Account (IRA). This life-saving funding mechanism enabled WFP to rapidly launch an emergency response as it unfolded, following the official request from the Government of Comoros, and to cover the immediate food needs of the most vulnerable cyclone-affected people. Additional funding was subsequently obtained through allocations from the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). CERF allocations were instrumental in accelerating critical food assistance and augmenting the capacities of partners and government counterparts in areas of supply chain, logistics coordination, and food security assessments.

The shortage of funds significantly affected the food distribution component under Strategic Outcome 1, which was implemented from May to September 2019. With 16 percent funding against the total needs-based plan, WFP had to re-orient its intervention and prioritised only 33,108 of the most vulnerable people, out of the planned 185,000 people. WFP procured the food items (rice, pulses, vegetable oil and salt) locally to help bring down the cost and reduce lead time while also supporting local production. WFP provided full three-month rations to the assisted households.

The technical assistance component under Strategic Outcome 2 was better funded at 48 percent against the overall needs-based and implementation plan. This enabled WFP to provide vital capacity and technical support to government counterparts and partners during the response. One notable achievement is the rehabilitation of the main government warehouse in Moroni and the purchase of two mobile Wikihall warehouses to increase the Government's storage capacity.

With available resources carried over from 2019 (both from the IRA and CERF), WFP extended capacity-strengthening initiatives into 2020, which were implemented under the capacity-strengthening component of Strategic Outcome 1 with 87 percent funding. The extension also enabled WFP to facilitate a transition plan and successful handover to the Government. Key activities during the year included conducting trainings for government counterparts and partners to enhance implementation capacity in emergency response preparedness and supply chain management, and setting up a community-based early warning system to help prepare for and respond to disaster or shocks. Amid the pandemic, WFP, alongside other UN agencies and partners, supported the Government in preparing for the crisis, including the development of a COVID-19 multi-sectoral response plan.



Annual CSP Financial Overview by Strategic Outcome

	Needs Based Plan	Implementation Plan	Available Resources	Expenditure
01: Crisis-affected populations are able to meet their basic food and nutrition needs in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth	 250,000	 250,000	 218,275	 218,275
02: Humanitarian and development partners have access to technical support for emergency response	 0	 0	 0	 0
Total:	 250,000	 250,000	 218,275	 218,275

The annual financial figures presented in this table are aggregated at Strategic Outcome level. The full presentation of the annual financial overview for the CSP, including breakdown of financial figures by activity, resources not yet allocated to a specific Strategic Outcome, Direct Support Costs and Indirect Support Costs are available in the Annual Financial Overview for the period 01 January to 31 December 2020.

Programme Performance

Strategic outcome 01: Crisis-affected populations are able to meet their basic food and nutrition needs in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth



Strategic Outcome 1 aimed to provide emergency unconditional in-kind food assistance to an estimated 185,000 cyclone-affected people for three months to support their access to food and meet their immediate basic food requirements. The planned number of beneficiaries was derived from an assessment undertaken by the Government and United Nations (UN) partners in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth.

The food assistance activity under this strategic outcome was completed in 2019. As WFP only received 16 percent of the needs-based and implementation plan, WFP had to prioritise the most food-insecure in areas where majority of families suffered substantial crop losses based on a food security assessment by WFP and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Overall, WFP reached a total of 33,108 people with three-month rations consisting of rice, pulses, vegetable oil and salt, sufficient to provide a minimum of 2,045 Kcal per person per day. WFP distributed a total of 1,238 mt of food items, which were procured locally for cost-efficiency and better lead time, while also supporting local livelihoods and production.

WFP worked with the Comoros Red Cross Society (CoRC), national disaster management agencies, local authorities and village committees in identifying the families who needed food assistance the most. A Local Management Committee (LMC) was created for each village, with a requirement that at least 50 percent of members be women. The LMCs were tasked with compiling an initial list of families with certain criteria such as whether their home had been destroyed, if they had suffered significant crop or livestock losses, and if they could meet their basic food needs. CoRC volunteers vetted the list prior to registration to ensure that the households selected met WFP's vulnerability criteria.

Strategic Outcome 1 also entailed a capacity strengthening component to support partners in various aspects of emergency response, particularly food distribution and supply chain management. To this end, WFP organized trainings for CoRC staff and volunteers followed by on-the-job mentoring for those involved in distributions and logistics. Specifically, WFP conducted training sessions in warehouse and commodity management with 15 CoRC staff and volunteers. On the programme side, WFP provided training to some 50 CoRC supervisors and volunteers in Ngazidja, Anjouan and Moheli. The training sessions covered the roles and responsibilities of a WFP implementing partner, beneficiary identification and targeting based on vulnerability criteria, management of the distribution cycle and site organization, promoting gender equality through humanitarian assistance, and the protection of people with specific needs. Results from the post-distribution monitoring showed that people were satisfied with how food distributions were organized.

WFP did not foresee a role in providing food assistance in the long term. However, capacity-strengthening activities and technical assistance continued into 2020, following a lessons learned exercise that identified additional gaps in capacity development. The exercise was led by the General Directorate of Civil Protection (*Direction Générale de la Sécurité Civile or DGSC*) and attended by representatives from the Government, UN, non-governmental organizations, and other humanitarian actors.

Under WFP's leadership and in collaboration with DGSC, CoRC, civil society and other stakeholders, a national Logistic Capacity Assessment (LCA) was completed during the year. The LCA serves as a source of information related to logistics infrastructure and services. It encompasses critical elements of the supply chain links, such as port and airport capacities, road and rail networks, storage facilities, handling procedures, labour rates, local transportation resources, energy and telecommunications, and other key elements required for operational support. Major gaps identified during the assessment, such as the need for better coordination and storage capacity, were incorporated into the national preparedness plans.

Building resilience to climatic shocks such as the Category 3 Cyclone Kenneth required taking a more comprehensive disaster risk management approach that encompasses enhancing the institutional capacity and improving the national disaster management plan. Strengthened disaster risk knowledge and capabilities will allow Comoros to more appropriately respond to future disasters while reducing the impact of shocks on its already vulnerable population. To this end, WFP provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior (through the Centre for Relief Operations and Civil Protection or COSEP) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment, Territory and Urban Planning, as well as local partners, by equipping them with essential skills and knowledge on disaster response logistics, supply chain management, and food security assessments. Primary activities involved training counterparts in areas of emergency response preparedness and supply chain management, establishing a community-based early warning system to prepare for, and respond to disaster or shocks, and updating the neighbourhood contingency plans and related standard operating procedures. Moreover, WFP helped established vulnerability-based beneficiary targeting criteria for future shocks. In support of the COVID-19 pandemic response, WFP, alongside UN agencies and other partners helped the Government in developing and implementing a COVID-19 multi-sectoral plan. WFP also augmented national logistical capacity by providing mobile storage units and other relevant equipment to bolster response capacities.

Towards the end of the emergency operation, WFP and partners developed a transition plan highlighting supply chain needs for continuity in operations, activities required to maintain response capacity, and steps for the establishment of minimum preparedness actions. WFP concluded the operation by successfully handing over the activities, including the complaint and feedback mechanism for protection concerns, as well as equipment, to the Government.

Strategic outcome 02: Humanitarian and development partners have access to technical support for emergency response



Activities under Strategic Outcome 2 focused on providing technical assistance to national disaster management agencies to strengthen institutional capacities of government actors to improve disaster risk mitigation, and preparedness and response mechanisms, especially in areas of logistics coordination, supply chain management, and food security analysis. Implementation of the activities began in November 2019 as part of the second phase of the response.

Despite limited funding and receiving only 48 percent of the needs-based and implementation plan, WFP was able to implement vital capacity-strengthening activities for government counterparts and other partners, as well as help enhance national response capabilities. WFP supported the rehabilitation of the main DGSC warehouse with capacity of 840 sq metres in Moroni, which is used for storage of humanitarian items. WFP also purchased four mobile storage units, two generators, a mobile light tower, as well as office furniture and equipment (such as laptop, printer and smartphone) for the DGSC situation room. Moreover, WFP conducted a two-day module training in transport, warehouse management, beneficiary targeting, and distribution cycle management, in Ngazidja, Anjouan and Moheli, reaching more than 60 staff from DGSC, other government entities, UN agencies, the Comoros Red Crescent Society (CoRC), and civil society organizations.

Additional capacity-strengthening activities were conducted until May 2020, following a lessons learned led by the General Directorate of Civil Protection (Direction Générale de la Sécurité Civile or DGSC) and attended by representatives from the Government, United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and other humanitarian actors. The exercise identified additional gaps in capacity development, prompting WFP to extend the operation. These activities in 2020 were linked and implemented under the capacity strengthening component of Strategic Outcome 1, and therefore not reported under Strategic Outcome 2.

Cross-cutting Results

Progress towards gender equality: Improved gender equality and women's empowerment among WFP-assisted population

Gender inequalities in Comoros remained entrenched despite the matrilineal nature of the Comorian society. The 2019 Gender Development Index put Comoros in the fifth group of countries, comprising of countries with low equality in Human Development Index achievements between women and men.[1] While matriarchal traditions give Comorian women economic power in the family structure, women have poor access to the labour market at the economic and social level. [2] This could be attributed to the low level of education and heavy responsibilities imposed by housework.[3]

During the emergency response in Comoros in 2019, WFP worked towards promoting gender equality and mitigating the risks of gender-based violence, especially for women and girls, who are historically more vulnerable during emergencies. During the beneficiary targeting phase, WFP worked with local authorities and village leaders in selecting the most vulnerable households for food assistance. A Local Management Committee (LMC) was established for each village and was required to have at least 50 percent of its members to be women. The LMCs were responsible for identifying and compiling the initial list of families that meet the WFP vulnerability criteria. As much as possible, WFP designated women to receive and pick up the food rations, serving as head of the household. This resulted in more women (64 percent) being assisted with emergency food assistance. Moreover, at the food distribution sites, a courtesy priority lane was set up for households headed by women and pregnant and lactating women, people with disabilities, and the elderly to reduce their burden when collecting their entitlements.

WFP's engagement with partners ensured that the assistance provided was relevant and fostered participation of women and girls. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) supported the same beneficiaries assisted by WFP through livelihood and income-generating activities to strengthen impact. Additionally, WFP and UNFPA ensured that the protection and health needs of women and girls were incorporated into the response. This included UNFPA distributing dignity kits to affected households who were also supported with WFP's food assistance.

In 2020, with WFP's focus on capacity-strengthening activities, the work on the promotion gender equality and women empowerment was integrated into the various trainings that WFP conducted with partners.

Protection and accountability to affected populations: Affected populations are able to benefit from WFP programmes in a manner that ensures and promotes their safety, dignity and integrity. Affected populations are able to hold WFP and partners accountable for meeting their hunger needs in a manner that reflects their views and preferences

There are currently no strong institutions and effective measures in place to address protection and human rights-related concerns in Comoros.[1] Existing health and other basic social services in the country is inadequate, making it a challenge for the Government to efficiently respond to the needs of the population. Human rights violations are widespread, but implicated people are rarely prosecuted. Moreover, sexual harassment is illegal but is rarely reported due to societal pressure.[2] Similarly, women are usually hesitant from accessing treatment for sexually transmitted infections due to societal and cultural concerns.[3] In emergency settings, these concerns are highlighted as the vulnerability of women, girls and children tend to increase as a result of displacement and the absence of essential services.

The onslaught of Cyclone Kenneth Comoros has fuelled a rise in migration and sexual violence, putting women and girls at greater risk. In 2019, WFP endeavoured to mainstream protection and apply the tenets of the do-no-harm principle by ensuring that the assistance do not create more risks or exacerbate the already fragile and vulnerable situation of the cyclone-affected population. These included working with partners and village leaders to ensure that food baskets are distributed during the day at broad daylight to reduce exposure to aggressions that could occur in the dark or when transport becomes difficult or slow. In partnership with the Comoros Red Crescent Society (CoRC), WFP organized all distributions in accordance with local customs, providing opportunities for community members to ask questions or raise any concerns. This ensured a high degree of awareness and community participation by both women and men. Village community centres served as distribution points to be in proximity to the beneficiaries' homes to reduce the time required to travel to and from the sites with the valued food commodities, especially for women and their young children. The CoRC and WFP also identified volunteers to assist the elderly and others with difficulty in carrying their food home.

When food is scarce, food rations become sought-after, and women and elderly carrying their food home, are susceptible to attacks and abuse. Post-distribution monitoring results in 2019 showed that people were satisfied with how food distributions were organized. Ninety-six percent thought that they were implemented in a dignified manner, while 97 percent felt the distribution site was safe.

Following community consultations, WFP established a country-wide complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) to improve accountability to recipients and serve them more effectively. To this end, WFP introduced communication channels such as telephone hotlines to complement the traditional letter boxes and feedback through WFP and cooperating partner. In order to ensure the provision of programme information, CoRC staff communicated with the beneficiaries the selection criteria, composition and collection method of their entitlements, and the complaint and feedback mechanism. Post-distribution monitoring results revealed that more than 85 percent of interviewed recipients had a full understanding of their entitlements, targeting criteria, and the duration of assistance. Results also showed that most households were able to use CFMs, which generated valuable outcomes. For example, WFP was immediately notified when a WFP-contracted truck was forced by villagers to offload food assistance, including stocks for a nearby village. This allowed WFP to urgently address the situation.

In 2020, with reports of a steady increase in the number of cases related to gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP worked with other UN agencies (UNFPA, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Children's Fund) and partner non-governmental organizations to intensify efforts to combat violence against women and girls. They advocated for continued access for women and children to sexual and reproductive health and GBV services. WFP also supported the development of a contextualized guidance note on the continuity of essential maternal and new-born health services.

Environment: Targeted communities benefit from WFP programmes in a manner that does not harm the environment

Due to its volcanic and island nature, Comoros is predisposed to a wide range of natural hazards such as volcanic eruptions, cyclones, torrential rains, flash floods, landslides, tidal waves, and drought. There is also a widespread degradation of natural ecosystems due to inappropriate environmental management, unsustainable harvesting of woody vegetation for fuel, and the removal of natural vegetation to support agricultural expansion. Comoros has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world, with more than half the land degraded.[1]

Agriculture, forestry and fishing is essential to the Comorian economy, especially among the poor, with the sector representing 33 percent of gross domestic product.[2] Vulnerability to extreme weather events, therefore, is a long-standing and continuing concern in the country, particularly for people dependent on agriculture for their jobs. The consequences of natural disasters vary from loss of lives and livelihoods, destruction of homes, damage to productive assets and infrastructure, and reduced food availability. The onslaught of Cyclone Kenneth in Comoros in April 2019 highlighted these climatic and livelihood-related vulnerabilities. The cyclone destroyed four-fifths of the agriculture land, resulting in the country losing up to 80 percent of its production capabilities, aggravating food insecurity. Food-insecure population often resort to negative coping strategies such as cutting back on meals and selling livestock and tools, which can have long-lasting effects, moving them in repetitive cycles of hunger and poverty.

The impact of Cyclone Kenneth also underscored the insufficient institutional and adaptive capacities of the Government in responding appropriately to climate change and climate-related shocks, stressors or risks. Moreover, Comoros has limited capacity to finance a national response to climate change, including investments in adaptation measures such as climate change prediction and natural disaster management.

WFP's activities in Comoros in 2020 focused on strengthening the capacities of the Government and local partners (such as the Comoros Red Crescent Society) to enable them to determine and implement response options when a disaster strike. WFP's actions dedicated to addressing the risks of climate disasters and mitigating their effects on food security included information sessions on environment conservation. Notably, in addition to trainings in emergency preparedness and supply chain management, WFP also contributed to the establishment of a community-based early warning system and neighbourhood emergency plans to empower communities to respond timely and appropriately during disasters.

Other UN agencies, particularly the UN Environment has been working with the Government and partners to revitalize 3,500 hectares of forests and watersheds. With support from the Global Environment Facility's Least Developed Countries Fund, the project, which began in December 2018 aims to plant 350,000 trees per year across the three islands, while backing these reforestation efforts with capacity building at the national and community levels.

Data Notes

2020 Overview

This Comoros Annual Country Report (ACR) 2020 serves as a closure report following the end of WFP's Limited Emergency Operation (LEO) in Comoros in May 2020. As no food distributions were implemented and no direct beneficiaries were reached in 2020, food and beneficiary data are not available in this report. See Comoros ACR 2019 for more details on 2019 activities.

Context and operations & COVID-19 response

[1] Between 2000 and 2019, Comoros' HDI value increased from 0.465 to 0.554, an increase of 19.1 percent. In 2019, Comoros ranks 156 out of 189 countries and territories on the HDI. UNDP. Human Development Report 2020. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COM>

[2] Poverty declined by over 10 percentage points between 2004 and 2014. World Bank. (2017). Union of Comoros - Comoros Poverty Assessment. [online] p.74–76. Retrieved from <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/342321528113131924/pdf/125069-WP-P156542-OUO-9-Comoros-Poverty-Assessment-revised.pdf>

[3] As of 2019, Comoros' GDP growth (annual) represented 2.0 percent, below Sub-Saharan Africa's average of 2.3 percent. GDP growth (annual % - Sub-Saharan Africa | Data. Data.worldbank.org. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=ZG>.

[4] The population growth of Comoros reached 2.2 percent in 2019. Population growth (annual %) - Comoros | Data. Data.worldbank.org. (2019). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.GROW?locations=KM>.

[5] African Development Bank. (2020). African Economic Outlook 2020 (p. 161). Retrieved from <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2020>

[6] The basic needs poverty line (KMF 25,341 per capita per month) adds an allowance for basic non-food necessities to the food poverty line. World Bank. (2017). Union of Comoros - Comoros Poverty Assessment (p. 5). Retrieved from <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/342321528113131924/pdf/125069-WP-P156542-OUO-9-Comoros-Poverty-Assessment-revised.pdf>

[7] Note that it is not clear whether households headed by women fare worse than male counterparts. World Bank. (2017). Union of Comoros - Comoros Poverty Assessment (p. 58). Retrieved from <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/342321528113131924/pdf/125069-WP-P156542-OUO-9-Comoros-Poverty-Assessment-revised.pdf>

[8] Comoros (COM) - Demographics, Health & Infant Mortality - UNICEF DATA. UNICEF Data. (2021). Retrieved from <https://data.unicef.org/country/com/>.

[9] Comoros - GHS Index. GHS Index. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.ghsindex.org/country/comoros/>.

[10] African Development Bank. (2020). African Economic Outlook 2020 Amid COVID-19, Supplement (p. 65). Retrieved from <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-economic-outlook-2020-supplement>

CSP Financial Overview

For the overall funding requirements, Strategic Outcome 1 was funded at 17 percent, while Strategic Outcome 2 was funded at 48 percent. No contribution was received in 2020. Carryover resources from 2019 funded the activities in 2020 at 87 percent under the capacity strengthening component of Strategic Outcome 1.

Strategic outcome 01

All food assistance activities under Strategic Outcome 1 were completed in 2019; thus, no related outputs and outcomes are reported in this 2020 report. However, WFP continued capacity-strengthening activities and technical assistance in 2020, which are all linked to Strategic Outcome 1.

Given the immediate and short-term nature of the operation, the corporate Gender and Age Marker (GaM) requirements do not apply.

Due to the short duration of humanitarian assistance, WFP was unable to gather comprehensive assessment data.



Strategic outcome 02

The capacity-strengthening activities and technical assistance to government counterparts and partners in 2020 are linked to the capacity strengthening component and budget of Strategic Outcome 1 and are therefore not reported under Strategic Outcome 2.

Given the immediate and short-term nature of the operation, the corporate Gender and Age Marker (GaM) requirements do not apply.

Due to the short duration of humanitarian assistance, WFP was unable to gather comprehensive assessment data.

Progress towards gender equality

[1] UNDP. Human Development Report 2020. Retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/COM>

[2] World Bank. (2019). Towards a More United & Prosperous Union of Comoros: Systematic Country Diagnostic (p. 28). Washington DC: World Bank. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/3178>

[3] UNDP. (2019). Union of the Comoros (pp. 6-7). USA. Retrieved from <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/comoros.shtml>

Protection and accountability to affected populations

[1] United States Department of State. (2014). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Comoros, 25 June 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/559bd57512.html>

[2] United States Department of State. (2014). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Comoros, 25 June 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/559bd57512.html>

[3] United States Department of State. (2014). Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Comoros, 25 June 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/559bd57512.html>

All food assistance activities under Strategic Outcome 1 were completed in 2019; thus, no related outputs and outcomes are reported in this 2020 report.

Due to the short duration of humanitarian assistance, WFP was unable to gather comprehensive assessment data.

Environment

[1] The Comoros lost 24 percent of its forests between 1990 and 2015, one of the highest deforestation rates in the world, according to FAO (2015).

[2] Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP) - Comoros | Data. [Data.worldbank.org](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=KM). (2019). Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=KM>.

Figures and Indicators

Strategic Outcome and Output Results

Strategic Outcome 02 : Humanitarian and development partners have access to technical support for emergency response						- Crisis Response
Output Results						
Activity 02: Provide technical assistance to national disaster management agencies and local partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity including logistics coordination, supply chain management and food security analysis.						
Output Category C: Capacity development and technical support provided						
Output	Output Indicator	Beneficiary Group	Sub Activity	Unit of measure	Planned	Actual
	C.5*: Number of capacity strengthening initiatives facilitated by WFP to enhance national food security and nutrition stakeholder capacities (new)					
C: Affected populations benefit from technical advice and coordinated support to national disaster management agencies and local partners to receive timely life-saving food assistance	C.5*.2: Number of training sessions/workshop organized		Individual capacity strengthening activities	training session	3	3

World Food Programme

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Cover page photo © WFP/Francesco Del Re

Women line up to receive WFP food assistance in the municipality of Niouma Komo on the island of Grande Comore (Ngazidja).

Financial Section

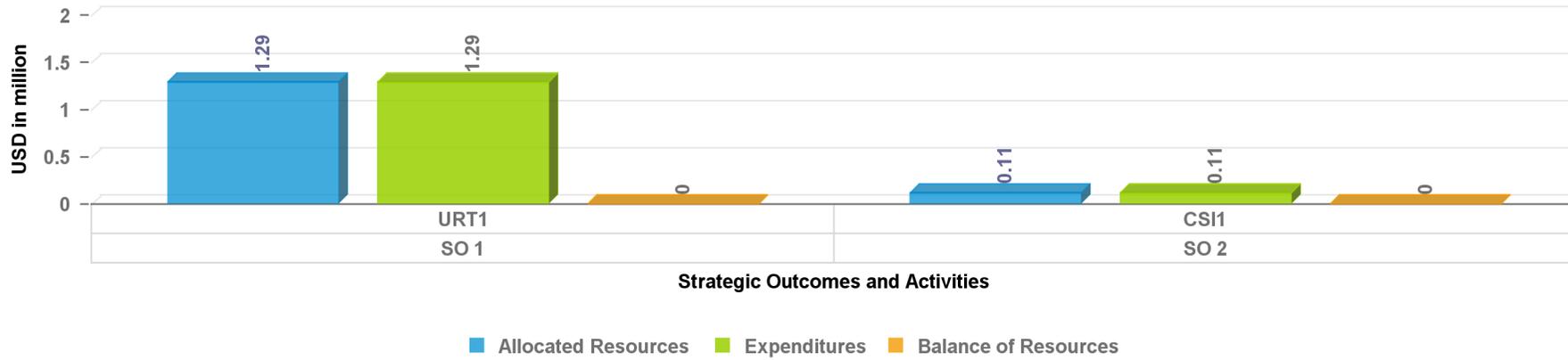
Financial information is taken from WFP's financial records which have been submitted to WFP's auditors.

Annual Country Report

Comoros Country Portfolio Budget 2020 (2019-2020)

Cumulative Financial Overview as at 31 October 2020 (Amount in USD)

Cumulative CPB Overview



Code	Strategic Outcome
SO 1	Crisis-affected populations are able to meet their basic food and nutrition needs in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth
SO 2	Humanitarian and development partners have access to technical support for emergency response

Code	Country Activity - Long Description
CSI1	Provide technical assistance to national disaster management agencies and local partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity including logistics coordination, supply chain management and food security analysis.
URT1	Provide emergency food assistance through in-kind transfers to shock affected populations

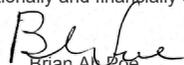
Annual Country Report

Comoros Country Portfolio Budget 2020 (2019-2020)

Cumulative Financial Overview as at 31 October 2020 (Amount in USD)

Strategic Result	Strategic Outcome	Activity	Needs Based Plan	Allocated Contributions	Advance and Allocation	Allocated Resources	Expenditures	Balance of Resources
1	Crisis-affected populations are able to meet their basic food and nutrition needs in the aftermath of Cyclone Kenneth	Provide emergency food assistance through in-kind transfers to shock affected populations	8,080,822	1,286,991	0	1,286,991	1,286,991	0
Subtotal Strategic Result 1. Everyone has access to food (SDG Target 2.1)			8,080,822	1,286,991	0	1,286,991	1,286,991	0
5	Humanitarian and development partners have access to technical support for emergency response	Provide technical assistance to national disaster management agencies and local partners to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity including logistics coordination, supply chain management and food security analysis.	236,146	112,913	0	112,913	112,913	0
Subtotal Strategic Result 5. Countries have strengthened capacity to implement the SDGs (SDG Target 17.9)			236,146	112,913	0	112,913	112,913	0
Total Direct Operational Cost			8,316,968	1,399,903	0	1,399,903	1,399,903	0
Direct Support Cost (DSC)			270,979	101,250	0	101,250	101,250	0
Total Direct Costs			8,587,947	1,501,153	0	1,501,153	1,501,153	0
Indirect Support Cost (ISC)			558,217	32,575		32,575	32,575	0
Grand Total			9,146,163	1,533,728	0	1,533,728	1,533,728	0

This CPB has been operationally and financially closed. This donor financial report is final.


 Brian AN Poe
 Chief

Contribution Accounting and Donor Financial Reporting Branch

Columns Definition

Needs Based Plan

Latest approved version of operational needs. WFP's needs-based plans constitute an appeal for resources to implement operations which are designed based on needs assessments undertaken in collaboration with government counterparts and partners

Allocated Contributions

Allocated contributions include confirmed contributions with exchange rate variations, multilateral contributions, miscellaneous income, resource transferred, cost recovery and other financial adjustments (e.g. refinancing). It excludes internal advance and allocation and contributions that are stipulated by donor for use in future years.

Advance and allocation

Internal advanced/allocated resources but not repaid. This includes different types of internal advance (Internal Project Lending or Macro-advance Financing) and allocation (Immediate Response Account)

Allocated Resources

Sum of Allocated Contributions, Advance and Allocation

Expenditures

Cumulative monetary value of goods and services received and recorded within the reporting period

Balance of Resources

Allocated Resources minus Expenditures