

Evaluation Brief

Decentralized evaluation for evidence-based decision making

Final Evaluation of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Guinea-Bissau (2016 -2019)

SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

In December 2015, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS), the USDA, and the WFP signed an agreement under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Programme. This agreement established the allocation of USD 20 million, which was distributed over three periods, aimed at supporting the activities established in Guinea Bissau's Country Programme. This agreement strategically targeted the improvement of literacy of school-aged children, and an increased use of health and dietary practices. Prior to the start of the program, a baseline study to inform situational analysis and program indicators was conducted in 2016. In 2018, as part of the agreement, an independent and external midterm evaluation was conducted and in 2020 a final evaluation occurred to assess the program performance and achievements.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned for both accountability and learning purposes i.e: assess and report on the performance and results of the McGovern-Dole school feeding project and determine the reasons why some results occurred or not to draw lessons, derive good practices and pointers for learning.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach and focused on the assessment of the following international criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance

The School Feeding Program (SFP) is very relevant to the needs of pupils, their families and local communities and is aligned with

educational policies and strategies of the Government of Guinea Bissau (GoGB). It alleviates short-term hunger and supplements household food income. The Take Home Rations (THR) given to girls from 4th to 6th grade have motivated parents to send their daughters to schools. The strategic evolution towards a programme based on locally purchased foods further increases the relevance of the programme to local communities and could thus have a positive effect on the local economy, thereby reducing poverty.

Effectiveness

All activities related to the distribution of school meals and THR were generally well performed as planned. Also, kitchens, storerooms and firewood saving stoves have all been renovated or constructed as planned. Targets related to deworming were only achieved in 2018 with under-achievements in previous years.

With regards to technical assistance, the support provided by WFP was critical for the development of a National School Feeding Law. Despite these achievements, there is still space for improvements for some of the supporting activities such as those related to training (30,3% of target) and to the production of school feeding reports (50,4% of target). The high turnover of the Ministry of Education (MoE) staff and recurrent strikes have been among the reasons for these levels of performance. Further support is also needed to enhance government experience and ownership especially with regards to the local food purchase project. The effect of THR on grade 4 to 6 girls was not explored due to in-existent monitoring data. However, evidence from qualitative data suggest a positive correlation between the reception of THR and school enrolment and attendance; and a negative one with school dropout rates. A narrowed gender gap is also observed in program's schools. While



WFP reached poor children, there is still some scope to include the poorest and most vulnerable communities by enhancing the selection criteria.

Efficiency

WFP has used very efficient methods, procedures and monitoring systems to ensure the transportation of food commodities to beneficiary schools. The management of these commodities was proven efficient when supported by an active engagement of School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent Associations (PA). The toll-free anonymous complaint and denunciation phone number is well known and regularly used by local communities. WFP has leak-proof systems to record the messages and deal with the issues accordingly. Resources constraints and inadequate infrastructures have hindered the role of local NGOs and are thus having implications for activities sustainability and quality.

Impact

Qualitative data showed that the SF program had a positive impact on students' retention, attendance and enrolment (especially for girls) and fulfilled children nutritional needs. With regards to safe food preparation and storage practices and the management of school feeding projects, the impact was limited due to an insufficient number of trainees (cooks, SMC, educational staff). However, WFP's trainings have contributed to enhance local awareness on diet diversification.

The WFP played a critical role for the development and promulgation of a National School Feeding Law.

A major unintended effect observed by the evaluation was program diversion effect on enrollment rates in schools with no canteens. Furthermore quantitative results showed that, some pupils receiving school meals were given lower food rations at home.

Sustainability

The WFP was the main implementing stakeholder but has supported the General Directorate for School Meals and Social Affairs (DGASCE) to strengthen its capacities and enhance its involvement. Progresses were made toward the development of a National School Feeding Law, and the HGSP pilot project is well appreciated locally. The Inter-Ministerial School Feeding Committee is being relaunched by the Ministry of National Education and Higher Education (MENES). The DGASCE staff have strengthened their management capacities and will now implement part of the pilot project in the Biombo region. In most schools, SMC and PA performed an operational and supportive role. Despite this, most of the members saw their participation as critical to ensure appropriate food quantity and quality are delivered to schools and to support community ownership and programme sustainability. The remaining challenges to sustainability are the limited national resources to support the SF program and the political instability that

is hindering increased government ownership. Further to that, the DGASCE has not yet created and implemented its own M&E system, quality-control procedures, and modus operandi procedures for the SF programme.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The McGovern-Dole Food for Education (FFE) programme was well implemented between 2016 and 2019, particularly with regards to food commodities management. The McGovern-Dole FFE programme had an important positive impact on alleviating short-term hunger of children and their families. It also contributed to positive educational outcomes. However other components such as capacity building support need further improvements.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this evaluation, 7 recommendations have been addressed to WFP Guinea Bissau Country Office:

R1: WFP should start monitoring the output indicators that refer specifically to girls in grades 4, 5 and 6.

R2: WFP should continue to be part of Local Education Group (LEG) aimed to the provision of Essential Learning Package (ELP) for the improvement of teachers skills; to the provision of didactic materials and to promote a much more efficient access to deworming medication for children.

R3: WFP should continue to adopt a more developmentalist approach regarding the SF program with a focus on sustainability.

R4: WFP should assist the DGASCE of the MoE in its reflection about the future HGSP model and modalities.

R5: WFP should jointly organize with the DGASCE a more in-depth study into the motivations of parents to keep their daughters at home and discontinue their education.

R6: WFP should work in collaboration with LEG, especially with UNICEF to urgently implement improvements in the availability and conditions of the toilets facilities for pupils in the assisted primary schools.

R7: To enhance sustainability, WFP should review its agreements with local NGO.