



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Lebanon WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2021

CONTEXT

An upper middle income country, Lebanon has 6.8 million people including 2 million of Syrian and Palestinian refugees. More than half of the population¹ live in poverty and high income inequality index of 31.8 and soaring inflation (174%)². The debt burden has surpassed 150% of gross domestic product³ causing a default in March 2020.⁴ Social protection remains nascent. Institutional weakness is reflected political crisis, failed banking system and social unrest.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

Covering the period 2018–2021, the Lebanon CSP has four strategic outcomes focused on food security, livelihoods, social protection, and national capacity strengthening. The total budget was USD 1.8 billion, of which 54.6% percent was funded by June 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 Lebanon. The evaluation assessed progress to deliver the CSP from 2018 to mid-2020 and operations since 2016.

It was conducted between January 2020 and April 2021 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 and factors that explain WFP performance.

The main users of this evaluation are the WFP Lebanon, the Regional Bureau for Cairo, headquarters technical divisions,

the Government of Lebanon, and 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 CSP was aligned with national priorities and commitments to SDGs 2 and 17, national strategies for agriculture, social development, the poverty targeting programme (NPTP) and UN strategic framework. It adapted to changing needs and addressed geographical areas with a high concentration of poverty and vulnerability among Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities. WFP demonstrated strong leadership and has been widely commended for its role in the refugee response. However, capacity strengthening was not based on a clear road map. While the CSP demonstrated a strong understanding of gender dynamics, it did not set out how gender-transformative approaches would be operationalized.

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

Maintaining coverage and scaleup during periods of increased vulnerability, WFP targeted the most vulnerable through cash-based transfers (CBTs). It met or exceeded outcome targets while remaining consistent with national development policies and refugee crisis response plans.

SO1: Unconditional food assistance and School feeding activities met targets for reaching vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees and students in public schools contributing to higher school retention rates and food security outcomes.

SO2: Livelihood interventions resulted in a positive effect on household food consumption, reduced use of negative coping

¹ World Bank. 2020. Lebanon Economic Monitor *The Deliberate Depression*.

² UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP. 2020. *VASyr*

³ Amer Bisat, L.C. 2020. *Should Lebanon Default? Restructuring Is Inevitable*.

⁴ Reuters. 2020. *Declaring it cannot pay debts, Lebanon sets stage for default*

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

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strategies, and restoring community assets.

SO3: Vulnerable Lebanese were assisted with e-vouchers and food e-card distributed via the NPTP. WFP managed to scale up its beneficiary caseload and contributed to better food consumption and nutrition diversity.

SO4: WFP's contributions helped strengthen the NPTP operational systems. Yet, a **capacity strengthening** road map to support the overall institutional set-up was lacking.

Humanitarian Principles: WFP helped alleviate hunger in a complex protracted crisis, upholding the humanitarian principle of humanity – to prevent and alleviate human suffering.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

Gender mainstreaming was integrated in WFP operations, but the CSP did not identify which gender barriers would be addressed or how they would be tackled.

Accountability to Affected Population (AAP): The establishment of the AAP unit was critical to the processing of beneficiary complaints through a joint WFP/UNHCR call centre, which facilitated the impartiality of WFP's response and needs-based coverage. There was better dissemination of information to beneficiaries and follow up on gender and disability concerns. However, CBT targeting criteria could have been better explained to beneficiaries.

Protection: Protection work consisted of tracking cases initiated through the call centre. Good progress was made in streamlining call centre operations and improving services. Yet, there a need to improve the timely handling of complaints, case tracking and referrals.

Triple Nexus: WFP's resilience building work contributed to a relatively peaceful co-existence between the Lebanese and refugee population groups.

Sustainability and connectedness: The Government currently lacks the political will and capacity to integrate refugees into the social protection system, so the prospects for a handover of CBTs for refugees to national management are limited at present.

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

Implementation of planned activities was timely. The adoption of an econometric desk-based formula for different activities improved the overall efficiency. Scaling up CBTs enhanced the cost-effectiveness of WFP operations. However, WFP lacked a consistent cost-effectiveness analysis to inform decision making.

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 the *Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition Security in Lebanon*.

Resource mobilisation: Most contributions were earmarked creating challenge to WFP when addressing pipeline breaks.

Partnerships: The E-Cash platform has been a concrete example of WFP working in partnership to make interventions more effective and improve practices through joint learning.

Flexibility in dynamic operational contexts although this was constrained by the complexity of the budgeting system and high staff turnover including loss of experienced staff.

Analysis of Outcomes was inadequate in the livelihoods and resilience programme. WFP did not disaggregate outcomes for Syrian and Lebanese participants and systematically analyse outcomes by gender or by persons with disability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The CSP introduced an integrated and coherent approach to addressing the root causes of vulnerability; and was designed to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development interventions. WFP made a strategic shift to national capacity strengthening through support for the development of social safety nets, mainly the national poverty targeting programme. However, there was limited progress in transformative gender mainstreaming at operational level.

WFP has established effective and efficient response mechanisms and was well placed to continue its dual role as a humanitarian and development actor. Its core comparative advantage was demonstrated through its swift ability to adapt programming in a timely and effective way. WFP achieved strong results in a challenging context, responding at scale to changing needs by targeting the most vulnerable Lebanese and refugees. Its interventions mitigated the long-term impact of the protracted refugee crisis and the deepening economic crisis on the most vulnerable.

There was a need to work with partners to achieve better integration and coordination of emergency cash assistance with livelihood interventions. Despite WFP efforts, the CSP did not increase flexible or non-earmarked funding. Major strengths of WFP's in-country capacity were its vulnerability analysis and mapping, monitoring and evaluation. But, more progress was needed at the level of outcome analysis to allow for assessments of the CSP strategic objectives.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1. Clarify WFP's core mandate and added value.

Recommendation 2. Enhance the strategic approaches, effectiveness and integration of programmes

Recommendation 3. Focus donor engagement on core funding, flexibility and response to national priorities.

Recommendation 4. Expand emergency preparedness and response.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen performance management.

Recommendation 6. Ensure sufficient human resources capacity.