



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of The Gambia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2021

CONTEXT

The Gambia is faced with a troubled economy arising from the poor performance of agriculture and industries, recurring climatic shocks, economic mismanagement, pervasive corruption inherited from the past regime and volatile oil and commodity prices.

Food insecurity and malnutrition remain major economic and social problems showing particularly high prevalence in The Gambia's rural areas; and disproportionately affecting women and children.

Recurrent shocks and the Covid-19 pandemic have exacerbated levels of food insecurity even further.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

This Country Strategic Plan (CSP) Evaluation covers WFP activities from January 2018 to September 2020, under The Gambia's T-ICSP (covering 2018) and ongoing CSP (2019-2021 to be extended until end of 2022 through a budget revision).

The CSP focuses on five strategic outcomes: i) enhanced food security and nutrition of crisis-affected people; ii) improved access of school children to nutritious meals; iii) improved nutritional status of children under the age of five and Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW); iv) enhanced resilience of smallholder farmers; and v) strengthened national and subnational institutions.

The total estimated budget for the T-ICSP was USD 7.71 million with which WFP planned to reach 142,246 beneficiaries. The total estimated CSP budget revised in 2020 amounted to USD 49.11 million, aiming to reach 732,572 beneficiaries.

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 preparation of the next CSP of WFP in The Gambia. It also informed the third budget revision requesting the one-year extension of the CSP.

It was conducted between May 2020 and April 2021 to assess WFP's strategic positioning and the role and extent to which WFP has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP; WFP's contributions to strategic outcomes; efficiency; and the factors that explain WFP performance.

The main users for this evaluation are the WFP The Gambia Country Office, the Regional Bureau for West and Central Africa, technical divisions at Headquarters, the Government of The Gambia, 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, overall, the CSP was largely informed by the zero hunger strategic review and well aligned to national policies and priorities, yet it could have paid more attention to overweight and obesity and to agricultural processing which are national priorities particularly relevant for rural women. The CSP displayed strong coherence with the United Nations system.

While provisions for emergency response were underestimated at CSP design stage, consecutive planning was based on rigorous assessments and WFP showed adaptability and capacity of scaling up its response when needed. Geographical and beneficiary targeting were mostly adequate, yet could be refined for schools feeding and resilience activities.

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

WFP's overall performance on CSP output delivery and outcome achievements varied widely from 2018 to 2020.

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

Innovations and technical assistance for emergency response were relevant, but food assistance in response to Covid-19 was delayed, mainly due to late funding.

The performance of the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme increased progressively. The 2018 hand-over of two regions to government was an appropriate step forward but further consolidation is needed to address significant capacity constraints.

Nutrition activities achieved targets, despite having suffered some delays. The activities benefited from effective synergies with partners. The HGSF programme could be more nutrition sensitive.

Smallholder farmer support and resilience activities were delayed due to late funding. Various bottlenecks negatively affected the local supply chain and the possibility for smallholders to become vendors to schools.

Numerous valuable capacity strengthening activities have been undertaken, many of them in support of the Government's response to COVID-19. However, WFP's role as an enabler lacked proper capacity gaps assessments, strategic planning and monitoring.

Cross-cutting issues: Gender approaches for the CSP had been properly designed, and after a slow start, the CO in 2020 gradually stepped up its efforts, resulting in a Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW) action plan, and regular capacity-building activities for WFP staff.

Protection considerations have been duly put in place, and proper information was provided to affected populations. While people were not sufficiently consulted at intervention design stage, a gender sensitive beneficiary feed-back mechanism was functional.

The Country Office managed to swiftly adapt to Covid-19 restrictions, developing methods for working from home and for remote coordination and data collection.

Sustainability and Triple Nexus: Efforts to hand-over activities to local partners were made but insufficient, in particular regarding nutrition activities and HGSF.

The CO applied a triple-nexus approach by promoting local procurement and by using food-for-assets to reduce disaster risks as well as to address climate change induced tensions in communities.

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

Activities were generally undertaken efficiently in terms of transfer costs. However, timeliness of some key activities was affected by late funding. Also, the frequency and periods of cash-based transfers to schools were not always

appropriate to allow for full participation of local smallholder farmers.

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

Resource mobilization: WFP activities in The Gambia have overall been sufficiently resourced through adequate multi-year contributions, thus allowing for long term planning. Flexibility in the use of resources was constrained by donor earmarking of most of the funding received.

Partnerships and collaborations: WFP strengthened strategic partnerships with both existing and new government agencies. In addition, WFP is fully collaborating with the UN's Delivery-as-One approach. The involvement of technical partners for the HGSF programme was insufficient.

Other Factors: COVID-19 restrictions, the slow pace of staff capacity-alignment, and overall deficient performance monitoring have challenged CSP implementation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The highly relevant CSP managed to leverage diversified and strengthened partnerships and positioned WFP well, both for saving lives and changing lives. With a few exceptions it aligned to national needs and priorities.

WFP was flexible and succeeded in scaling-up assistance and adapt its work modalities during the Covid-19 crisis. Implementation of activities was broadly successful, even if the CSP document had underestimated crisis response needs and despite delays for the implementation of some activities and approaches, including those related to gender.

Further consolidation is needed in terms of the hand-over of the HGSF programme; and refined processes and procedures would facilitate increased smallholder farmer participation in this programme as well. Finally, there was good progress in terms of capacity strengthening, but there is room for enhanced strategic planning and monitoring in this area.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Continue supporting the thematic areas of the current CSP, with strong focus on strengthening national capacities; and with some adjustments to increase alignment with national priorities and needs.

Recommendation 2: Elaborate a capacity-strengthening strategy.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen the gender approach of the CSP.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen the CSP's M&E system.

Recommendation 5: Improve the approach and processes related to local purchase in the HGSF programme.