



World Food Programme

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Evaluation of China WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017-2021

CONTEXT

As an upper middle-income country, China has experienced substantial progress in poverty reduction and social development over the last two decades. Challenges remain in reducing residual poverty and inequality, and in extending successful national programmes to marginalized communities. China's Gini index of 38.6 reflects high inequality of social gains between wealth groups.¹ In 2018, there were still 30.5 million people in China living below the national poverty line.² Rural poverty and its consequences on food security and nutrition are largely concentrated in remote and mountainous areas. There has been a growing involvement of China in international development and South-South cooperation.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

Under the China CSP 2017-2021, the WFP China Office supports efforts to ensure domestic food security and nutrition under Strategic Outcomes (SO) 1,2 and 3; and functions as a WFP Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation on South-South Cooperation, and as a WFP global office to raise funds and forge partnerships in support of global food security and nutrition targets under SO 4 and 5. The total budget for the CSP was USD 31 million, of which 17 million or 54% percent has been funded by March 2021 mainly through resources raised in China.

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 China. It covers WFP activities from 2017 to 2020.

It was conducted between August 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 China Office, the Strategic Planning Division, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of China, 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 evaluation found close collaboration on CSP design between the Government and WFP, helped ensure alignment with China's overarching development strategy, the Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) and UNDAF. The CSP is also strongly aligned with China's national poverty eradication campaign and sustainable agriculture and resilience initiatives. The CSP specifically targeted counties with high poverty incidence and food and nutrition-deficit. The CSP design was gender sensitive, but sometimes reinforced traditional gender roles.

WFP China Office has positioned itself as a convener of stakeholder groups in China, negotiating with potential donors and helping leverage other organisations' technical expertise. Nonetheless, WFP's profile within China remained low.

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

Overall, CSP activities have generated positive results but on a small-scale, compared to the highly ambitious targets outlined in the CSP³.

SO1: The preschool nutrition activities contributed to more varied diets for young children and improved nutritional health awareness, although there are sustainability

¹ World Bank

² WFP. August 2018. China Country Brief

³ Example: SO1: 34 million undernourished children; SO2: 16 million beneficiaries; SO3: 10 million indirect beneficiaries

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

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concerns once project subsidies will be withdrawn.

SO2: Agricultural projects helped poor smallholder farmers participate in the kiwi fruit value chain and promoted cultivation of zinc-enriched potatoes but were in a too early stage to fully assess their impact on farmers' livelihoods.

SO3: While disaster preparedness and response represented an opportunity for relevant collaboration, capacity strengthening in this area was limited because of the Government's already high capacity and the time needed to build relationships with relevant partners.

SO4: WFP China Centre of Excellence for Rural Transformation on South-South Cooperation (SSC) built a network of Chinese experts and mobilized those in demand-driven – but not always sufficiently context-specific learning events mostly on agricultural technology - benefitting 70 countries.

SO5: WFP expanded partnerships with public institutions and private enterprises mostly in the technology sector. The China Office continued fundraising for WFP international programmes, mostly from the Government of China and the Chinese public, and for the domestic pilot projects, mostly from the private sector. Despite substantial efforts, progress has been slow in formalizing the financing partnership to facilitate WFP's access to China's international development funding.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The CSP design was gender sensitive, encouraging participation of women, targeting women with specific activities, and collecting gender disaggregated data. Nonetheless, some trainings reinforced traditional gender roles. The Centre of Excellence has mobilized diverse experts, including a gender empowerment expert. The participation of women in learning events has been encouraged but remained low (19.5%).

Accountability to Affected Populations

Domestic projects were participatory and responsive to the views of beneficiaries.

Sustainability

Although the domestic projects currently had government matching funds, the future funding envelope to continue or expand project operations is not confirmed. The sustainability of domestic project achievements varied by context and was not guaranteed. The network of Chinese experts built by the Centre of Excellence has good potential for sustainability.

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

Overall, outputs have been delivered in the intended timeframe. Resources were used in line with intended budgets and there was no evidence of inefficiencies. Cost-benefit analyses of the domestic pilot projects were not planned but would be helpful to advocate for their upscaling.

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 is based on findings from the 2016 national food security and nutrition study ("Zero Hunger") which provided new evidence on the hunger challenges, particularly in China's poverty counties.

Resource mobilisation: The WFP China partnership was funded by a variety of national donors but with limited funding predictability and strong earmarking, which led to some funding imbalances in the CSP.

Partnerships: WFP China Office is uniquely positioned within the specific context of China and has heavily engaged in the development of partnerships and collaborations demonstrating the importance of a country presence for WFP.

CSP flexibility: The CSP provided an overarching framework for operations but in general had little influence on the flexibility of the programme.

The definition of the CSP's strategic outcomes was vague and overly ambitious and the chain of expected results lacked clarity. The CSP's focus on capacity strengthening was weakened by a lack of clear indicators and targets to monitor progress.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

Overall, the CSP is aligned with the direction of the government and has remained a relevant approach to supporting the government to meet the food and nutrition needs of the country. Looking forward, more emphasis will be required on evidencing the results of the domestic pilot projects to demonstrate their added value for China as an entry point for possible WFP engagement on domestic issues. This would also help promote their upscaling within China and possible dissemination abroad through SSC. Technical advice provided through the Centre of Excellence could be better adapted to the specific context of recipient countries. The current financial model for the CSP needs stabilizing through a more strategic funding approach for the CSP priorities. Mutually satisfactory procedures for WFP to access official development assistance funding from China still need to be confirmed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Strengthen its strategic engagement with the Government of China on WFP and China's priorities and areas of expertise as entry points to maximize global impact of the WFP-China partnership.

Recommendation 2. Further identify effective ways of working with internal and external stakeholder groups in China.

Recommendation 3. Further strengthen processes in domestic programme and the Centre of Excellence for capturing, sharing and communicating results, and enhancing learning.

Recommendation 4. Develop a clear plan for firming up China's long-term contributions to WFP.