



Evaluation of El Salvador WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017-2021



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

CONTEXT

El Salvador is a lower-middle-income country. Located within the Dry Corridor of Central America, it is regularly exposed and highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Multidimensional poverty affects both rural and urban households, and food insecurity and malnutrition represent a public health issue. El Salvador's agriculture sector is dominated by smallholders, predominantly subsistence-oriented. Violence, organized crime and GBV are a significant concern.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The El Salvador CSP articulates the shift from emergency response to addressing recovery from disasters and root causes of vulnerability through national and local capacity strengthening with five strategic outcomes focusing on vulnerable households' access to social protection; smallholder farmers; increased resilience; assistance to people affected by disasters and government institutions capacity strengthening.

The total budget for the CSP was USD 88.8 million, of which 40 percent was funded by 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 El Salvador. It covers WFP activities implemented from 2016 to 2020.

It was conducted between October 2020 and July 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 for this evaluation are the WFP El Salvador Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the

Caribbean, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of El Salvador, and other country stakeholders.

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 the country strategic plan was relevant to national priorities and adequately addressed key development issues, including social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

In a context of ongoing crises, WFP was an indispensable partner for the government and positioned itself at the centre of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, although awareness of its enabling role is still limited among its partners.

The CSP addressed the needs of the most vulnerable and allowed beneficiaries' voices to be incorporated into development processes due to WFP's widespread presence in the field and its proximity to communities.

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

The CSP introduced new ideas into public policies and regulatory frameworks through advocacy and policy dialogue and strengthened food security plans and programmes.

At the community level, the CSP strengthened social fabrics and networks among producers and contributed to the establishment of emergency preparedness and response programmes and plans, strengthening communities capacity to respond to emergencies.

At the individual level, CBT seed capital, training and workshops contributed, among other things, to improvements in nutrition and self-esteem, the adoption of healthy habits and the economic empowerment of the beneficiaries. Training of government officials resulted in an increase in the capacity to manage contingencies, risks and uncertainties and

strengthened response to climatic emergencies.

Impartiality, respect for target populations, professionalism, neutrality and promotion of the autonomy of assisted populations are distinguishing features of the CSP. Through the active use of community-based participatory planning and complaint and feedback mechanisms, voices of affected populations were heard, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CSP contributed to environmental protection by implementing activities that promoted the preservation of natural resources.

The CSP considered the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) through interventions that ensured the equal presence of women and men beneficiaries and contributed to an increase in decisions made by women on the use of assistance provided by WFP.

Overall, the country strategic plan created conditions for the sustainability of interventions through the institutionalization of activities and country capacity strengthening at the individual, organizational and enabling environment levels. Scalability of pilot projects however was limited for reasons beyond WFP's control.

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

In emergency settings, assistance through CBTs was timely and met its distribution targets. In contrast, institutional and capacity strengthening activities not linked to emergencies faced delays due to administrative procedures and external factors such as institutional adjustments resulting from the change of government.

WFP was agile and quick to identify and assist households during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic and in response to the Amanda, Cristobal, Eta and Iota tropical storms, with appropriate targeting and coverage. It was proactive in implementing cost-efficient strategies and seeking alternative cost-effective measures to reduce transaction costs in delivering assistance.

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

Human Resources: Partners appreciate and acknowledge CO management leadership and technical staff know-how, dedication, and capacity to think "outside the box" and innovate.

Partnerships: In implementing the CSP, the country office maintained its historical partnerships, incorporated new partnerships and positioned itself within multipurpose networks relevant to its mandate.

Resource mobilisation: Resource mobilization was a challenge, and the country office faced funding shortfalls for most of the CSP term. Most of the multilateral directed contributions were earmarked at the activity level and had limited flexibility.

Use of evidence: WFP's inputs for evidence-based policymaking and targeting of social protection programmes are valued and used by national government institutions, civil society organizations and United Nations entities.

Results Based Management: While Internal learning loops exist, the CSP did not establish a Knowledge Management

strategy and applied to a limited extent Results Based Management principles.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The CSP achieved positive results across all outcomes, with significant contributions to Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 17 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development overall.

WFP is recognized as a key player in humanitarian response in the country, but is less well known for its contributions to development and capacity strengthening.

The CSP architecture was intended to provide more flexibility in programming and enhanced internal synergies among strategic outcomes. With few exceptions, including COVID-19 response, however, these aspects were not fully explored, due to siloed programmatic work.

The CSP did not incorporate a gender transformative approach to country capacity strengthening and to partnership.

The lack of an established internal knowledge management strategy brought about a limited application of results-based management principles, and the country office did not make optimal use of the available evidence for its own strategic decision making during implementation.

Some of the assumptions underpinning the logic of intervention of the CSP at design stage only partially held true during implementation, particularly as relates to availability of funding and continuation of projects by government counterparts, with implications for programming and sustainability of results.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. WFP should harness its strategic position and reputational capital to position itself as a key development partner

Recommendation 2. The new CSP should link strategic outcomes, explicitly incorporate strengthening of national capacity and expressly capture the logic of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Recommendation 3. Continue adopting a gender-transformative approach in partnerships and in the implementation of inter-agency strategies.

Recommendation 4. Develop a strategy for enhancing the sustainability of interventions

Recommendation 5. Promote results-based management approach

Recommendation 6. Develop a resource mobilization strategy with medium- and long-term horizons.