



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
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# Evaluation of Kyrgyz Republic WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022

## CONTEXT

The Kyrgyz Republic is a mountainous, landlocked, lower-middle-income country in Central Asia with significant multidimensional poverty. The economy is dependent upon international remittances which makes it vulnerable to external shocks. While food security has improved, it remains a significant issue for rural communities due to the sensitivity of its agricultural systems and geography. Two out of three food-insecure people live in remote valleys where recurring climate-related shocks and disasters affect the livelihoods and food security of communities and women in particular. The country has recently experienced a complex socioeconomic and political transition.

## SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

WFP country strategic plan (CSP) for 2018–2022 transitioned WFP from an implementing to an enabling role focusing on social protection and country capacity strengthening (CCS) in food security, resilience-building and school feeding. WFP planned to provide direct food assistance (in-kind food and cash-based transfers) as well as technical assistance. The total budget for the CSP was USD 68.6 million, of which 64 percent was funded by December 2021.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation aimed at providing evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next WFP CSP in the Kyrgyz Republic. Conducted from August 2021 to March 2022, it examined WFP's strategic positioning and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP; its contributions to strategic outcomes (SO); and efficiency and factors that explain WFP performance. The evaluation covers the CSP design phase in 2017 and WFP activities implemented from 2018 to October 2021.

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

### WFP's strategic positioning and role against country priorities, people's needs and WFP strengths

The CSP was aligned with national priorities and strategies in its focus on enhancing social protection, country capacity and school feeding. The social protection logic underpinning the CSP could be

expanded and consolidated to better support the most vulnerable. The plan was also somewhat constrained by the lack of a strategic objective related to crisis response.

WFP was perceived as an agile and important partner for the coordination of the COVID-19 response; it supported United Nations country team (UNCT) partners and the coordination of the Government-led response to the pandemic.

Beneficiary needs were identified through vulnerability analyses, which were updated during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the beneficiary selection criteria for some activities could have unintentionally excluded some vulnerable households.

As a partner, WFP was recognized for its comparative advantages in the generation and use of data and analysis and its flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues. WFP is seen as one of the lead United Nations agencies supporting the "Delivering as One" approach, the coherence of the United Nations development assistance framework and the imperative to "leave no one behind".

### Extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to strategic outcomes in the Kyrgyz Republic

The CSP met most output targets, but progress towards outcomes was uneven. Under SO1, WFP successfully contributed to the national roll out the school meals programme (SMP) and to the legislative and management systems for national capacity. The long-term gains on beneficiaries, however, are still to be confirmed.

Regarding SO2/SO3 which were implemented together, WFP successfully reached beneficiaries in the targeted districts through food assistance for assets and food for training. However, contributions to climate change action, supported under SO3, were limited due to delayed funding from Green Climate Fund.

Under SO4, the CSP contributed to national capacity with interventions in policy development and institutional effectiveness. WFP provided technical support on the management of data collection, evidence analysis and data visualization. Yet, support was concentrated at the national level, with limited engagement at district and local levels.

Under SO5, WFP provided conditional CBT as part of early recovery assistance to households affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although beneficiaries perceived positive changes, the

prognosis for long-term food security outcomes is not clear given the nature of the activities chosen and the limited amounts transferred.

Progress has been made towards gender sensitivity, with significant gains in WFP programming approaches. However, gender transformative approaches are not yet fully embedded in the activities, partly due to limited gender expertise in the country office. WFP performed well on protection aspects. Beneficiary complaint and feedback mechanisms were set up, yet beneficiaries were not fully aware of them. All activity selection processes included environmental risk assessments.

Progress towards the sustainability of CSP achievements was uneven across SOs with particular challenges.

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

The CSP has generally delivered outputs in a timely manner. The lack of a crisis-response focus area in the original CSP and the need for a budget revision delayed delivery of WFP early recovery support under SO5 during the pandemic.

The national coverage of the CSP is appropriate and beneficiary targets were mostly reached or exceeded. Yet, it is possible that selection criteria could have inadvertently excluded extremely vulnerable households whose members were unable to work or schools whose infrastructure did not meet WFP requirements.

The CSP was reasonably cost-efficient although this varied across activities and SOs. Food transfers proved to be more cost-effective than cash for WFP due to the Government's role in managing food distributions.

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

The CSP was informed by an array of studies and analyses and drew upon broad consultative processes and research with national counterparts and United Nations partners.

The CSP architecture is intended to promote internal coherence in WFP operations. However, as each SO is managed separately, in practice there are limited links among SOs.

The CSP enabled WFP to adapt programming to respond to emerging needs, even if the CSP's initial focus on development hampered WFP's ability to introduce new activities on crisis response. Nevertheless, external stakeholders commended WFP's flexibility and proactiveness in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CSP benefited from flexible and multi-year funding, but such funding is at risk due to reliance on a small group of donors. Partnerships with government ministries are strong but were often siloed. Funding shortfalls and ongoing government reforms limited partnerships for climate change adaptation.

Consistently strong government interest in social protection and a strong UNCT coordination framework provided a solid enabling environment for WFP operations. Yet, the CO's ability to establish partnerships to address root causes was challenged by changing government structures and functioning and shifted priorities.

The country office capacity was stable but stretched. This reduced coherence and expertise and increased staff workload.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overall Assessment**

The CSP facilitated WFP's strategic positioning in CCS and its collaboration with the other members of the UNCT in supporting government efforts to achieve SDG targets. It also contributed somewhat to increased strategic engagement across the triple nexus—despite internal and external limiting factors—and improved operational flexibility and responsiveness.

WFP successfully contributed to CCS and it achieved most of its output and beneficiary targets, guided by clear targeting and beneficiary selection criteria. Nonetheless, the conditionality of assistance may have excluded extremely vulnerable people or schools unable to meet WFP criteria.

The design and underlying social protection logic of the CSP supported internal coherence across SOs. In practice, however, the management of the CSP by SO did not facilitate synergies.

Although WFP's social protection programming was well received by the Government, the organization's support to national systems and structures and the targeting of the most vulnerable was constrained by a lack of harmonization of social protection initiatives by the United Nations country team. There is scope for WFP to expand and consolidate its strategic positioning on social protection to support government efforts.

As a partner WFP took a leading role in coordination with the UNCT, the Government, civil society organizations and funding partners. WFP forged strong technical and service delivery partnerships, creating the potential for greater multisector, multi-actor collaboration across the triple nexus.

Progress was made towards gender sensitivity, with significant gains in programming and in meeting corporate gender requirements. However, gender transformative approaches were not fully embedded in the CSP activities.

The CSP benefited from flexible and multi-year funding, but that did not lead to expanded resource mobilization. On the contrary, the CSP remains underfunded and the donor base is shrinking.

Sustainability remains a challenge for the CSP activities, particularly with respect to the institutionalization of capacity development. Sustainability challenges also stem from the management of projects as standalone activities rather than linked components of long-term, multi-stakeholder programmes.

While the CSP has potential to make broad contributions to the achievement of the SDGs, there is limited evidence that can be used to identify long-term contributions to development outcomes.

### **Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** Strengthen the next CSP's overarching and SO-specific conceptual frameworks, in particular for CCS. Establish clearer links among SOs to enhance the internal coherence of the CSP and foster greater contributions to long-term development outcomes.

**Recommendation 2.** Continue to expand WFP social protection strategic positioning.

**Recommendation 3.** Build on existing good practices to continue strengthening its partnerships with the Government, other United Nations entities and civil society for enhanced complementary programming and sustainability.

**Recommendation 4.** Continue to seek to diversify WFP's donor base.

**Recommendation 5.** Continue to refine and reassess WFP coverage and targeting to better reach extremely vulnerable or potential new beneficiary groups covered by WFP direct assistance programmes and CCS interventions.

**Recommendation 6.** Invest further in evidence generation either through WFP-led studies or by supporting government capacity to track long-term contributions to development outcomes, enhance project management and inform policy development