



World Food Programme

SAVING
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Evaluation of Bolivia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2022

CONTEXT

With a population of 11.6 million, the Plurinational State of Bolivia remains the second poorest country in South America, with high levels of inequality. High vulnerability to food insecurity affects 2.4 million people. Bolivia is highly exposed to climate hazards and has been strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the loss of livelihoods.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The Bolivia Country Strategic Plan (CSP) (2018-2022) focused on shock-affected communities' ability to meet basic food and nutrition needs (Strategic Objective (SO) 1); improving the nutritional status of vulnerable groups at risk of malnutrition (SO2); improving the food security and nutrition of smallholders through improved productivity and incomes (SO3); strengthening the capacity of national and subnational institutions to manage food security policies and programmes (SO4). The original budget for the CSP was USD 11.68 million, of which 72.9 percent was funded by September 2021.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The CSP evaluation (CSPE) 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 Bolivia. It covered WFP activities implemented from 2018 to September 2021.

Conducted between March 2021 and February 2022, it assessed WFP's strategic positioning and contributions to strategic outcomes (SOs); efficiency and factors that explain performance; and the extent to which WFP was able to respond to emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Main users of this CSPE include the WFP Bolivia Country Office, the Regional Bureau in Panama, WFP HQ technical divisions, the Government of Bolivia, and other local 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 CSP was aligned with national priorities and development plans, as well as with the Government's commitments for achieving SDG 2, 5 and 17. WFP was valued for its role in emergency response but has not yet managed to position itself in the fields of resilience and livelihood development.

WFP's interventions were generally aligned and coherent with the United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) (2018-2022). WFP has developed several collaboration agreements with local partners and other humanitarian and development actors. However, such agreements do not currently reflect a long-term strategic vision or WFP's positioning vis-à-vis its partners. The design of the CSP addressed the needs of the most vulnerable people and was informed by vulnerability studies and needs assessments.

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

WFP made distinct contributions across all four SOs.

In particular, under **SO1 (emergencies)**, significant changes in the consumption patterns of affected communities were observed. WFP's support was very important during emergency responses – including COVID-19 – in that it enabled access to a food basket that lasted up to three months.

Under **SO2 (nutrition sensitization)**, evidence suggests participants' satisfaction with the knowledge acquired through the campaign. However, national stakeholders confirmed the need for longer-term approaches to achieve significant and lasting behavioural changes.

Under **SO3 (smallholder farmer support)**, WFP food assistance through the various transfer modalities met food insecure households' needs. As a result of Food Assistance for Assets interventions, beneficiaries were able to restore assets – including degraded land, gardens, irrigation canals and wells – which allowed them to increase production and hence income.

from produce sales. The sustainability of the resilience achievements remains a challenge.

Under **SO4 (capacity strengthening)**, national and subnational institutions supported by WFP strengthened their capacity to manage food security and emergency programmes and systems. However, high staff turnover in national institutions, lack of long-term vision and strategy by WFP, and the COVID-19 pandemic hampered institutionalization of capacities.

WFP's activities generally promoted **protection** and **solidarity awareness** while avoiding the exclusion of vulnerable groups. Yet, protection-specific actions were limited, and there is a need for more comprehensive risk assessments. WFP mainstreamed **gender** in the CSP structure as well as in all its interventions and analyses, lack of specific gender indicators notwithstanding,

With some variations, **sustainability** of the achievements remains a challenge. While the emergency response component was prioritized, resilience and CCS were not addressed to the extent necessary to ensure the sustainability of achievements.

WFP's efforts to balance its humanitarian approaches with development interventions had limited success, constrained by the limited presence of other development actors in the areas where WFP operates.

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

Overall, the implementation of the CSP was timely within its operating parameters. Responsiveness was adequate and positively assessed by stakeholders. Nevertheless, alignment of WFP processes with the needs of various actors, including at the government level, was a challenge.

The coverage and targeting of WFP's activities responded to various emergencies and to the Bolivian authorities' requests for support. However, this did not result from a strategic reflection aimed at maximizing synergies and enabling longer-term action that would allow greater impact and sustainability.

Moreover, although WFP's interventions spread across all of the country's departments, interventions did not cover large geographical areas and rarely focused on the municipal and community levels.

Motivated by scarce resources, WFP sought the comparative advantages of various transfer modalities and implementation of measures aimed to increase cost-effectiveness.

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

Mobilizing predictable and flexible funds was a major challenge, leading to reactive rather than strategic interventions. The absence of a clear partnership strategy hindered progress.

The CSP provided sufficient flexibility to respond to the COVID-19 emergency, responding to the immediate needs and the work towards the socioeconomic recovery.

Internal resources and capacity were not sufficient to achieve the expected strategic shifts. Securing long-term funding sources more suited to the new strategic directions and developing strategic partnerships also presented significant challenges.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall assessment: The evaluation revealed specific contributions to each of the intended strategic outcomes throughout the CSP period. While the emergency response component was prioritized; nutrition, resilience and capacity

strengthening were not addressed to the extent necessary to ensure the sustainability of achievements and limited WFP's ability to implement a clear long-term strategy.

Strategic positioning: significant and continuing obstacles to the operationalization of the CSP — limited resources, socio-political and COVID-19 crises — constrained WFP's ability to develop and implement a clear long-term strategy.

Focus of the CSP: Overall, the scope and quality of WFP's contribution to CSP strategic outcomes were significantly greater in respect of emergency response and CCS than resilience, nutrition or cross-cutting objectives.

Partnerships: the current level of joint effort with other United Nations entities is not deemed sufficient for the achievement of long-term intersectoral results and joining forces with strategic partners to provide comprehensive support is necessary.

Funding and advocacy: Resource mobilization efforts were not fully successful in part because of a lack of fully-fledged funding and communication strategies to facilitate engagement with Government and donors. The role played by WFP as a facilitator vis-à-vis the Government required great negotiation capacity and sensitivity, beyond the mere provision of technical expertise.

Efficiency: WFP made good use of limited capacity (in terms of quantity) and resources and WFP generally implemented activities in a timely manner; however, the limited coverage and the small-scale and dispersion of activities did not favour synergies or economies of scale.

Participatory vulnerability analysis and targeting: The short-term interventions aimed at meeting immediate needs have not yet led to community ownership or facilitated strategic links between humanitarian and development work. Some limitations were observed in the learning dimensions of the monitoring system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Develop a package of assistance that better reflects WFP specific added value and achieve a balanced approach across strategic outcomes.

Recommendation 2. Strengthen WFP strategic positioning through revised approaches to capacity strengthening, partnerships, risk management and gender.

Recommendation 3. Prepare a partnership strategy that clearly defines responsibilities, coordination and synchronization of work plans.

Recommendation 4. Develop more precise and interconnected funding and communication strategies.

Recommendation 5. Develop a strategy for human resource needs and internal capacity-building.

Recommendation 6. Capitalize on WFP recognized expertise in geographical and household targeting to improve and institutionalize current tools.