WFP Sao Tome and Principe
Country Brief
September 2022

Operational Context
In 2021, the estimated GDP per capita in São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) amounted to approximately USD 2,361.7. Recent World Bank estimates show that about 15.3 percent of the population lives on less than USD 1.15 per day while another 29 percent of the population is poor, using a poverty line of USD 3.65 per day.

In the past decade, the country has made considerable progress in reducing child mortality and malnutrition, and in improving maternal health. However, in 2014, it was estimated that 17.2 percent of children aged 6-59 months were stunted, 8.8 percent were underweight, and four percent were suffering from wasting.

The 2021/2022 Human Development Index value of 0.618 maintains the country in the medium human development category, ranking 138 out of 191 countries and above the Sub-Saharan Africa average by 0.071 points. According to the same Human Development Report, São Tomé and Príncipe has a Gender Inequality Index (GII) value of 0.907, ranking it 138 out of 191 countries in the 2021/2022 index.

With São Tomé heavily dependent on food imports, food availability is unpredictable: there is no deep-sea port, and, in bad weather, landing is difficult on the country’s single short airstrip. In addition, no cereals are cultivated on the island. The country is prone to natural hazards such as floods and landslides, which negatively affect crop development and road access as well as destroy houses and household assets. On 28 and 29 December 2021, and in March 2022, São Tomé was hit by tropical storms of high intensity that destroyed more than 670 hectares of production. More than 1,500 producers are directly affected by this crisis, including 1,000 horticulture families and 500 livestock farmers and fishermen.

WFP assistance is focused on strengthening capacities of the Government to implement the national home-grown school feeding programme, facilitate smallholder farmers’ access to markets and help save lives when a crisis erupts.

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<th>Population: 215,056</th>
<th>2021 Human Development Index ranking: 138 out of 191 countries</th>
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<td>Income level: lower middle</td>
<td>Chronic malnutrition: 17.2 percent of children aged 6-59 months</td>
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In Numbers
No food assistance distributed
USD 1.8 million six-month (October 2022 - March 2023) net funding requirements
6,000 people assisted in September 2022

Operational Updates
- In September, with the support of WFP, the Government concluded the emergency food assistance to the 1,500 households affected by the floods in December 2021 and March 2022. Additionally, the Government initiated the distribution of small boats and fishing materials to 47 affected fishers, an activity closely monitored by the Country Office’s Monitoring and Evaluation, Programme, and Communication staff. Following guidance from the UN Resident Coordinator, all UN field visits were put on hold due to parliamentary, municipal, and regional elections held in the country on 25 September, which followed an electoral campaign from 10 to 23 September.

- On 1 September, WFP attended the official opening of the new school year 2022/2023, an event chaired by the Prime Minister, with the participation of the Minister of Education and Higher Learning, other members of the Government, and development partners. WFP is not directly funding school meals for the 2022/2023 school year, although it has ensured food for its first three months – from the previous funding period. Due to the election period, classes are expected to start on 3 October 2022.

- In September, the UN Resident Coordinator Office, jointly with WFP, UNDP, and WHO, finalized a funding proposal, approved by the Council of Ministers and submitted to a private sector entity. The intervention aims to improve health and cooking conditions in São Tomé and Príncipe schools’ facilities, through the provision of clean and renewable energy and water. The pilot project in 25 schools is expected to positively impact the school feeding programme by increasing its quality and reducing the costs.

- In September, WFP coordinated the development of the country’s Global Climate Fund Proposal, for a climate adaptation intervention. The submission is due in early October 2022.

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Photo credit: © Milton Machel/WFP
Photo caption: WFP and Government continue providing assistance to crisis-affected communities in Sao Tome and Principe
Monitoring, Assessments and Communications

- On 21 September, the WFP-led Joint UN SDG project to Promote Local Food Value Chains and Equitable Employment Opportunities Through a Sustainable Agri-Food Industry in São Tomé and Príncipe convened its technical evaluation committee, chaired by the Country Office Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. The meeting was meant to select the winning bidder of the public tender for the design and construction of an irrigation and drainage system in the agricultural community of Camavo/Pinheira, in Cantagalo district. A local company, ECOMOVEL LTD, was selected, and works will start in the last quarter of 2022.

Challenges

- WFP’s funding situation continues to be challenging. The six-month net funding requirements for WFP’s various activities amount to USD 1.8 million.

- The potential change of the ruling party following the 25 September parliamentary, municipal, and regional elections, may affect the implementation of ongoing projects and partnerships established with the current Government. Previous post-election changes of government have been followed by probes and audits to State accounts after the swearing of new government. A similar scenario could be expected, due to frictions and differences between the two main political forces, during the current legislature including the electoral campaign.

- São Tomé and Principe's economic crisis reached its heights, with the impacts of COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine affecting the country’s capacity to deal with imported inflation, from its main sources of food, fertilizers, and fuels. The annual inflation rate in São Tomé and Principe accelerated for the tenth straight month to 19 percent in August 2022, from 18.5 percent in the previous month. It was the highest reading since February 2009. On a monthly basis, consumer prices rose by 2.8 percent, the highest since July of 2008, according to the Central Bank of São Tomé and Principe.

Donors

Donors to WFP’s CSP include the Government of Sao Tome and Principe, the SDG Joint Fund and other UN funds and agencies.