



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Algeria WFP Interim Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022

CONTEXT

Algeria has hosted Sahrawi refugees from Western Sahara since 1975. The Sahrawi refugees live in five camps near the town of Tindouf, 2,000 km southwest of Algiers. A harsh agroecological environment, infertile soils, and scarce, heavily mineralized water resources make life and agricultural production conditions difficult in the camps.

For the past 45 years, the population suffers food insecurity and malnutrition, with high rates of anaemia due to the scarcity of fresh and diverse food and the limited access to water, and therefore depends on external food assistance.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

WFP has provided assistance to Sahrawi refugees in Algeria since 1986, mainly through general food assistance, school feeding and nutrition activities. The introduction of the interim country strategic plan (ICSP) marks an attempt to improve WFP's programming strategy to better meet the needs of those refugees.

As of June 2021, 68.5 percent of the entire four-year ICSP needs-based plan had been funded, leaving a shortfall of USD 18.5 million.

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 programme in Algeria. It covers WFP activities implemented from 2018 to June 2021 and also takes into consideration the preceding transitional interim country strategic plan.

The evaluation was conducted between January 2021 and March 2022. It started in 2021 in line with the planned end date of the ICSP in June 2022, however, the ICSP has since then been extended to end-2024.

The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Algeria country

office, partners in the country, Regional Bureau in Cairo, headquarters divisions, and other stakeholders.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on people's needs and WFP's strengths

The ICSP focuses on crisis response as part of a coordinated humanitarian response. It attempts to improve WFP's programming strategy to better meet the needs of refugees and combine humanitarian assistance with resilience-building and nutrition sensitization activities. It was consistent and complementary to interventions of other UN partners.

While humanitarian logic holds that WFP should provide food for all vulnerable refugees, WFP has not been in a position to design operations as a generational solution that tackles the root causes of food insecurity.

WFP actively sought to understand and address refugees' needs and the ICSP design was evidence-based. Programming demonstrated a strong appreciation of vulnerability based on gender, age and disability but evidence for targeting based on food security status is limited. Instead, it appeared that general food assistance was distributed to all refugees independent of their food security status.

The targeting of vulnerable children for school feeding has been enhanced through the inclusion of pre-schools and special-need centres in school feeding programmes. While complementary activities are very pertinent in enhancing access to less available fresh foods, they do not target nor directly reach, the most food-insecure people

Extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to ICSP strategic outcomes in the refugee camps

WFP ensured refugees' basic food and nutrition needs were met all year round by providing general food assistance for the planned number of beneficiaries. However, food security indicators only improved between 2019 and 2020. The beneficiaries interviewed unanimously mentioned the importance of the rations in their daily lives. However, a large share of beneficiaries perceived the distributed rations as too

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small.

WFP provided snacks (milk and high-energy biscuits) to schoolchildren of 5–17 years of age, with the objective of improving nutrition and reducing anaemia. The contribution of this activity to the overall nutrition-related objectives of the ICSP is uncertain given that school feeding was limited to a snack and beneficiaries highlighted the variety and choice of snacks as areas for improvement. Enrolment and retention rates have remained high during the period under review, but it was difficult for the evaluation to assess the extent to which school feeding contributed to those results.

In the context of complementary activities to facilitate the production of fresh food, WFP implemented livelihood-focused activities that included hydroponics, fish farming and Waterboxxes. The effects of complementary activities have been limited so far, although the positive results in terms of the production of fruits and vegetables achieved by the introduction of Waterboxxes in 2020 should be acknowledged. The implementation of these activities faced challenges, and output achievements varied, while the activities involved only a very small number of refugees. Despite the absence of conclusive evidence, the complementary activities present high potential to improve the nutrition situation in the camps as they were designed to produce food items missing from the refugees' diet.

WFP sought to address moderate acute malnutrition by providing special nutritious foods through feeding programmes targeting pregnant and lactating women and children of 6–59 months of age, and by promoting access to fresh food from local markets through value vouchers. While it is too early to see results, the combination of increased coverage of nutrition activities, the provision of fortified food, and increased investment in social and behaviour change communication could have the potential to address long-term trends in anaemia.

The evaluation found no evidence of beneficiaries being put at risk or protection concerns linked to WFP activities. WFP's accountability is expected to be strengthened through the launch of a toll-free anonymous hotline.

Inclusion is promoted through targeting of women, children and the disabled. Women have been specifically targeted and their inclusion in programme implementation is strong, but gender dynamics have been explored only to a limited extent.

Complementary activities aimed to provide a coherent link between humanitarian action and development but faced challenges.

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

The delivery of outputs was frequently interrupted owing to lack of funding. Nevertheless, general food assistance was delivered without interruptions, however, it faced challenges in adhering to distribution schedules.

COVID-19 affected the whole portfolio, in particular, school feeding and slowed down the implementation of complementary activities.

While resources have been used efficiently, complementary activities still need to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness.

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

WFP staff were highly appreciated by partners and strong progress was made in programming despite understaffing.

Funding was inconsistent and unpredictable and not all donors adhered to the principles of good humanitarian donorship.

Monitoring arrangements have not yet led to improvements in the monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes.

WFP and partners performance was heavily influenced by the political setting.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

Humanitarian entities (United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations) are mandated to provide life-saving assistance in a context that still lacks an internationally agreed long-term solution..

WFP operations have demonstrated numerous strengths, including strong partnerships and the introduction of innovative approaches.

While WFP made considerable efforts to assess the needs of refugees it has sidestepped targeting refugees based on food security levels.

The gender dynamics within the refugee camps are currently insufficiently understood. WFP needs to ascertain the actual extent of gender equity in the camps and to strengthen its understanding of gender dynamics in order to implement gender-transformative programmes.

The ICSP has not succeeded in attracting stable funding and this has affected its implementation. Nonetheless, In the face of funding challenges WFP has used its limited resources carefully.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Address funding challenges

Recommendation 2. Clarify WFP's strategic position regarding the accountability constraints posed by the current working relationship with the Algerian Red Crescent and its partners on the ground.

Recommendation 3. Enhance needs-based targeting.

Recommendation 4. Strengthen the effectiveness of complementary activities.

Recommendation 5. Improve the design and implementation of activities and strengthen integration among activities.