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WFP EVALUATION

Mid-Term Evaluation of the WFP McGovern-Dole Funded School Feeding Project in the Republic of Congo 2018-2022

Evaluation period - September 2018 to May 2021

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3. Executive Summary

Project Background and Purpose

1. This is the mid-term evaluation (MTE) report of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project commissioned by the World Food Project (WFP) in the Republic of Congo from 2018 until 2021. The project is implemented with a budget of USD 30,022,053 funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). Late arrival of overseas commodities (food) meant that project activities were delayed until September 2018. The project now runs over four school years (SY 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22) instead of the five originally planned; finishing as agreed at the end of school year 2021/22.¹ The MTE was originally planned for 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It covers that period from September 2018 to June 2021.
2. The 2020 Human Development Report² ranks the Republic of Congo as a medium human development country with a Planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI)³ of 0.567 and ranked 147 out of 189 countries on the standard HDI.

Project description

3. The McGovern-Dole project is implemented in seven different departments, namely Pool, Plateaux, Cuvette, Bouenza, Lekoumou, Likouala and Sangha (see map in Annex 2). The beneficiaries are primary school pupils from grades one to six.
4. McGovern-Dole projects have two Strategic Objectives (SOs) which are “Improved Literacy of School-Age Children” (SO1) and “Increased Use of Improved Health and Dietary Practices” (SO2). As stated in the project agreement between FAS and WFP, the McGovern-Dole project pursues five main objectives:⁴ Improved literacy of school-aged children, increased use of health and dietary practices, increased capacity of government institutions, improved policy and regulatory framework, and increased government support and engagement of local organisation and community groups.
5. To reach these objectives, a total of eight activities have been planned.⁵
 - Activity 1: Building capacity by supporting the implementation of the Systems Assessment for Better Education Results (SABER) action plan and Government National School Feeding Policy (NSFP).
 - Activity 2: Improve student enrolment by raising awareness of the importance of education.
 - Activity 3: Establish/Strengthen local agriculture and school communities to support graduation through the implementation of the national home-grown school feeding project.
 - Activity 4: Distribute food to provide school meals to children⁶.
 - Activity 5: Promote improved health by building/rehabilitating latrines; building and rehabilitating water stations and hand-washing kits; and deworming.

¹ At the time of publication of this report, WFP has requested a one-year no-cost extension (i.e. running over 2022/2023 school year).

² UNDP; Human Development Report 2020, The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene; 2020

³ The Planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index adjusts the standard HDI by a country's level of carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint, each on a per capita basis.

⁴ Project Agreement Between the Foreign Agricultural Service and the World Food Project for the Donation of Agricultural Commodities and Related Assistance Under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project, Sept 2017.

⁵ From the ToR, pages 5 and 6 and Project Agreement Between FSA and WFP, pages 21-24.

⁶ The agreement signed between WFP and FAS states that the project will distribute approximately 9,950 metric tonnes of school meals such as vegetable oil, split yellow peas and fortified rice and that the meals would be supplemented by iodized salt provided by the Government of Congo and canned fish provided by Japan.

- Activity 6: Support improved literacy by distributing school supplies; supporting revision of the national curriculum, distribution and training on the revised curriculum; promoting teacher attendance; training of teachers; and training of school administrators and officials.
 - Activity 7: Promote improved nutrition by training and raising awareness on good health and hygiene practices; and training and raising awareness on the importance of improved nutrition, health and dietary practices.
 - Activity 8: Support improved safe food preparation and storage by building and rehabilitating kitchens and storerooms; and providing energy saving stoves and kitchen utensils.
6. The overall purpose of this MTE is to assess progress towards the achievement of intended McGovern-Dole outputs and outcomes and assess whether the baseline recommendations have been actioned and integrated into project implementation and, if so, whether these baseline recommendations were successful in strengthening project implementation. The mutually reinforcing objectives of the evaluation are:⁷
 7. **Accountability for actions and results.** The objective is to evaluate the progresses made so far towards achieving results, compared with the baseline.
 8. **Learning and adjusting based on lessons.** The MTE also looks at why certain results were achieved or not. It will draw lessons, derive good practices and pointers for learning. The purpose is to inform operational and strategic decision-making, including any course correction measures required by WFP.

Evaluation Questions

9. The evaluation has used the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability as the basis for determining and reporting the evaluation findings.

Table 1 Evaluation questions by OECD-DAC criteria

OECD-DAC criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance	Is the project's strategy relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, including girls, boys, men, women and other groups such as indigenous peoples?
	Is the project aligned with the national government's policies and strategies for education and school meals?
	Do the design and implementation of the project complement other donor- and government-funded initiatives?
	Is the project designed to reach the right people with the right type of assistance?
Effectiveness	What is the progress of the project implementation—is the project on track to carry out all activities as planned?
	To what degree has the project resulted (or not) in the expected results (outputs and outcomes) for girls, boys, men and women?
	To what extent have USDA's activities improved student attendance, attention, the quality of literacy instruction and contributed to improved literacy among school-age children?
	How effective has the project been at reducing health-related absence?
	How effective has the project been at improving knowledge of health, sanitation and hygiene practices?
	How effective has the project been at increasing knowledge of safe food preparation and storage?

⁷ As stated in the Terms of Reference.

OECD-DAC criteria	Evaluation questions
	How effective has the project been at increasing nutrition knowledge?
	What internal and external factors affect the project's achievement of intended results?
	Are any changes required to increase the project effectiveness?
Efficiency	How efficient is the targeting?
	Did assistance reach the right beneficiaries (girls, boys, men and women) in the right quantity, quality and at the right time?
	Is the project efficient in terms of costs and costs per beneficiary?
Impact	To what degree have the program outcomes made progress toward positive long-term effects on targeted beneficiaries (girls, boys, men and women), households, communities and institutions?
	Have there been any unintended outcomes (positive, negative)?
	What internal and external factors affected the project's results from leading to intended impact on targeted beneficiaries?
Sustainability	Is the project sustainable/is there strategy for sustainability, sound policy alignment, stable funding/budgeting, quality project design, institutional arrangements, local production & sourcing, partnerships & coordination, community participation & ownership?
	What progress has the government made toward developing a nationally owned school meals project?
	How are local communities involved in and contributing toward school meals?
	What needs to be done within the remaining period in order to transition to a nationally owned school meals project?
General	What are lessons noted from the project up to this point?
	Are there any recommendations for mid-course corrections to improve the project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability?
	How relevant was WFP's adaptation of the project to respond to COVID-19? ⁸

Design and Methods

10. The evaluation design applies a mixed-method approach to derive evaluation findings. The quantitative component of the evaluation applies a quasi-experimental prospective approach which includes a case and a comparison group of schools so that, at endline, the impact of the intervention can be measured using difference in differences tests. Data was collected by the National Institute of Statistic (INS) from a total of 107 schools from all 7 departments. This represents, 107 school directors, 186 teachers, 2,038 pupils, and 109 school feeding committee members which adds up to a total of 2,440 people who have replied to the different INS surveys. The evaluation team undertook 57 interviews, either on site or remotely and conducted 23 focus discussion groups. An early grade reading assessment test was conducted by the PASEC in 80 schools to 1,081 second grade pupils. A comparison group of approximately 700 children has been selected from non-supported schools.

Limitations

11. Variations in PMP indicator data collection processes and reporting during the project cycle created challenges for providing a summative analysis. PMP indicators would benefit from clarification on data collection methods and consistency in reporting methodology. To assess project achievements,

⁸ This question will be answered keeping in mind that the evaluation team members have only basic knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19.

the ET based analysis on the final version of the Indicator Tracking Table (ITT) provided by the CO as well as the semi-annual performance reports (SAPR) produced by the WFP CO and submitted to USDA. However, the ET identified areas of inconsistency which made it difficult to understand the achievements reached throughout the project.

12. Due to the COVID-19 situation, the international team members could not travel and did all possible interviews remotely. A second national consultant was recruited to work aside the initial national consultant.
13. **The expected users** of the report are WFP (Country Office, Regional Bureau, Headquarters, Office of Evaluation), the Government of the Republic of Congo, the ministries associated with the McGovern-Dole project, sub-recipient partners which are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ACTED and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), implementing partners, the FAS and USDA.

Findings

14. **Relevance.** The evaluation found that the design of the project is relevant to the Congolese context as health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and literacy are of main concerns throughout the country. Congo has low levels of literacy and numeracy and the nutrition and health needs in Congo are high. The school feeding activities are very relevant for addressing food security needs; data collection show that the project feeds children from poor households for whom the school meal is sometimes the only meal they receive throughout the day. However, project activities are inappropriate to respond to inadequate literacy education as agreements with sub-contracted partners have resulted in the implementation of activities that do not contribute to improved literacy of school-age children, the target population for McGovern-Dole projects. Throughout the last three years of the McGovern-Dole project, WFP has made effort to build institutional capacity for school feeding at the level of the Directorate of School Feeding (DSF – Direction de l'alimentation scolaire) both at the national and regional levels. Those activities are entirely relevant especially regarding ownership of school feeding activities by the government. However, the model of using imported food runs counter to the government's preference for home-grown school feeding model that uses locally produced food.
15. The project also targets the indigenous population, which is a vulnerable population in the country. Specific schools for the indigenous population are part of the McGovern-Dole project.
16. **Effectiveness.** The effectiveness of the project is assessed against the main project SOs as defined by the USDA Results Frameworks (RFs) and the activities defined in the MoU between WFP and the FAS.
17. **SO1: Improve literacy of school-aged children.** The development of the guidelines by UNESCO, intended to be on improving literacy, focused instead on food security and nutrition and targeted adults, mothers and single mothers, rather than school-aged children. The agreement between WFP and UNESCO was established for only one year. There are therefore no further opportunities for providing training as intended. Over 550 administrators benefited from UNICEF the training (95 percent of planned) including school directors, school district inspectors, heads of school districts and heads of school administration in the departmental directorates of primary, secondary, and literacy education.⁹ UNICEF was also responsible for the distribution of school supplies and materials. School supplies were distributed to more than 54,237 children since the launch of the project. However, the exact quantities and types of supplies distributed, especially the literacy related materials, is not clearly reported, so it is not possible to evaluate their potential effectiveness.¹⁰ The other activities included in the FAS/WFP agreement related to improving the quality of the literacy curriculum have

⁹ Past Performance Review, UNICEF.

¹⁰ The last SAPR indicates that during the period October 2020-March 2021 a total 5,153 textbooks and other teaching and learning materials have been provided.

not been sub-contracted out by WFP and have not been implemented even though are central to achieving SO1¹¹. As a result, spending on literacy-related activities is much lower than planned.

18. With more than half the children coming to school on an empty stomach (~60 percent), the school meal is important to reduce hunger and enable children to concentrate in class. Results from teachers surveyed in the MTE reveal improved perception of student attentiveness at midline. Importantly, according to ACR figures, proper size meals cannot be provided every school day, as the volume of food that's been distributed is far less than the planned volumes. This may reduce the impact of the school feeding component. The MTE also highlights reduced student-reported absences, another important factor in contributing to SO1 according to the McGovern-Dole RF.
19. **SO2: Increase use of health and dietary practices.** Overall, the evaluation found that the activities implemented to support the increased use of health and dietary practices have had mixed results. WFP's involvement in nutrition activities has been limited by the lack of involvement from the CO nutritionist. Training materials that were originally intended to provide information to school children on the benefits of a healthy diet, including the importance of eating a wide range of foods (dietary diversity) are more suitable for adult or older learners and do not include dietary diversity. The number of school administrators/officials trained by UNICEF in nutrition and health was not monitored. However, evidence collected in the MTE indicates gaps in teacher training. Eighty-two percent of teachers in supported schools surveyed in the MTE reported that they have not received any training on health and nutrition in the past 12 months. Surveyed school cooks said they had not received specific nutrition training.¹² Teachers who were trained reported that the topics included are already part of their school curriculum, with no new information specific to the McGovern-Dole project.
20. The planned work with UNICEF to help the MoH establish a nutrition monitoring system has also not yet been done, and WFP does not have regular engagement with the MoH.
21. Work by WFP's partners ACTED and UNICEF to support construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure has led to an increase in the number and condition of kitchens and food storage facilities found in the supported non-ORA schools since baseline. Supported ORA schools had less school feeding related infrastructure than the supported non-ORA schools. Distribution of fuel-efficient stoves have been done but they are in limited use because they were not able to cope with the large volumes of food required for school meals.
22. Similarly, support to the construction and rehabilitation of school latrines has been ongoing but the percentage of schools with sex-separated latrines is still well below international SPHERE standards. Water availability in schools remains an issue. All schoolchildren receive deworming medication from WHO/UNICEF each year. However, data on this is missing from the ITT in the SAPR.
23. **Gender:** The project has actively encouraged community committees to put women into leadership positions. The MTE found that the percentage of female presidents on school feeding committees has substantially increased and overtaken the objective for the end of the entire project. Most of the school cooks are women. The project has missed several opportunities to help transform cooks' lives. According to field interviews, most cooks have never received training, and are not paid, despite being critical for project implementation. During FGDs, some cooks report receiving one glass of rice each day after work. As a result of the lack of payment, there is frequent rotation of cooks to minimize the workload per person. The issue of no remuneration was raised during the baseline and seems to be a permanent problem.
24. **Efficiency:** Transportation is a major challenge in Congo. According to WFP's Logistic Unit, roads have been deteriorating over the last years, and not enough is done by the Government to repair and/or maintain them. WFP outsources most of its transportation of food commodities to private companies.

¹¹ These activities include development/revision of a national curriculum focused on literacy and numeracy, the distribution of new textbooks reflecting the revised national curriculum to schoolchildren and the provision of training to teachers on the revised curriculum.

¹² There is high rotation of cooks. Therefore, it is possible that some cooks were trained despite sampled cooks reporting no training.

There are limited companies that can supply vehicles for delivering small quantities (under 500 kg) to remote areas with poor road conditions. This leads to delays in delivery. The CO logistics team is considering how to restructure processes to ensure timely delivery.

25. As the primary school feeding actor in Congo, WFP has managed to leverage USDA's support not only to implement the McGovern-Dole project but also to engage other partners in school feeding activities, secure additional funding and develop complementary activities directly linked to the McGovern-Dole project.
26. WFP, through the McGovern-Dole project, also managed to re-engage the government into contributing to school feeding activities as it used to before 2016. The government's contribution has consisted of the provision of salt and cash for handling.
27. **Impact:** The improvement of students' literacy depends on many related factors; teaching quality, access to learning materials, attendance rate, attentiveness of pupils, and so on. All these elements are part and parcel of a logical model methodically developed by USDA.
28. The essential components to support improved literacy curriculum, specifically the development of a project for teaching literacy, production and distribution of teaching and learning materials, and training of teachers to use the new materials to enable teachers to effectively teach literacy, have not been implemented. In the absence of these elements, the impact of the McGovern-Dole project is expected to be drastically reduced or even non-existent. Indeed, the endline evaluation will serve as an important test of the validity of the McGovern-Dole ToC in its assumption of the contribution of attentiveness and attendance to literacy outcomes.
29. The results described in the report for the SO2 indicate that the McGovern-Dole project has not yet made substantial progress in improving the nutritional situation of school children overall. Implementing partners succeeded in building/rehabilitating WASH facilities included in the project design. Further investments would be needed to comprehensively address infrastructure needs in all targeted schools. The project's health and nutrition activities are intended to improve children's health and contribute to reduced health-related school absence. However, nutrition curriculum developed by UNESCO did not target school-aged children, most surveyed teachers reported that they were not trained and most surveyed students reported that they had not received information on health and hygiene in schools. In terms of reducing health-related absences, evidence is positive with a reduction in the proportion of students reporting absences in the past four weeks. However, the fact that the predominant reason for being absent was illness, which was reported more frequently at midline compared to baseline data, highlights continued health-related challenges facing pupils. Importantly, this data is self-reported which presents questions on accuracy and questions on illness were only asked of the subset of students reporting illness rather than capturing changes in health outcomes for the student body overall.
30. **Sustainability:** Through its capacity-building activities, mainly with the Ministry of Education and its Directorate of School Feeding (DSF), WFP continuously works towards sustainability. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in most capacity building activities being suspended, slowing progress of these efforts. The DSF still needs more capacity strengthening, not only on the national level, but also at the departmental level.
31. Evaluation findings show that communities are not contributing to the school canteen activities as expected. In targeting the poorest communities, the suitability of this requirement should be reviewed. Whilst firewood and water are provided by the community on a regular basis, it is not the case for vegetables and fruits which are of utmost importance to increase dietary diversity. Further, expecting the community to provide cooks for no remuneration is not realistic, as people are looking for employment. Field visit interviews with cooks and school feeding committees revealed that people get demotivated due to lack of payment. The issue of cooks' payments is recurrent to several school feeding project and is directly linked to the gender and protection issues where food assistance should do no harm to the safety, dignity and integrity of the women, men, girls and boys receiving it, and is provided in ways that respect their rights.¹³

13 WFP; WFP Gender Policy 2015-2020, 2015

Conclusions

32. **Relevance:** The McGovern-Dole project strategy is relevant to the literacy and nutrition and health context of children in Congo. However, project implementation has not sufficiently tackled the literacy objectives. The project's food security activities are relevant in providing a social safety net for poor households. However, the McGovern-Dole model of using imported food is not coherent with the government's preference for home-grown model that uses locally produced food as stated in the National School Feeding Policy (2016). Using locally produced food would not only help the local economy but would also allow the McGovern-Dole project in Republic of Congo to gain independence from foreign food assistance.
33. **Effectiveness:** Since the launch of the project, some activities intended to improve literacy have either not been implemented (because they have not been contracted to partners, mainly activities linked to the objective of improving the quality of literacy instruction) or have not been designed to correctly target literacy objectives of school-aged children. Activities should be directly targeting the upper-level objective of improving the quality of literacy instruction.
34. To be properly acknowledge the effectiveness of the school feeding activities, WFP needs to improve the consistency and accuracy of activity and output reporting. The volume of food distributed for the school meals has been substantially less than planned, which means the meals have not been provided every school day and/or the quantity provided to children was less than the recommended ration. Hence, the number of beneficiaries does not give a clear picture of the effectiveness.
35. The lack of involvement of the CO nutritionist led to reduced coordination amongst the partners which reduced common messaging on health and nutrition. However, there were positive results from the more immediate health-related activities, with UNICEF and ACTED both successfully constructing and rehabilitating school infrastructure, including kitchens, storerooms and latrines. For health outcomes to be better realized, more comprehensive infrastructure investments, especially on the availability of clean water, will need to be incorporated.
36. The evaluation also notes mixed results in the mainstreaming of gender. Some positive results are noted, including increases in the percentage of women in leadership positions within the school feeding committees. However, the non-remuneration, and high workload of predominantly female cooks is a persistent problem in school feeding operations.
37. **Efficiency:** Targeting of schools has been efficiently carried out through collaboration with the Ministry of Education. However, the efficiency of the project has sometimes been compromised by logistic challenges that resulted in delays in distributing food to schools. Cost efficiency calculations for the school feeding component are limited due to variations in data reporting year to year. Furthermore, community contributions, which vary by location, are not systematically captured to allow for adequate cost efficiency calculations.
38. **Impact:** Findings from the MTE raise questions on the achievability of the project objective of improving the literacy of school age children given limited progress and relevance of activities meant to improve the quality of literacy instruction (MGD 1.1). Results of the literacy test conducted for MTE reveals minimal differences concerning improvement in reading skills of students attending supported schools. The lack of substantial differences between supported and non-supported schools at midline highlights the need to review the assumption that activities to support attentiveness and enrollment, without changes in the quality of literacy instruction, can have a meaningful contribution to literacy outcomes.
39. On the health and nutrition objective, several of the activities are likely to positively affect the school environment and contribute to a more conducive learning environment for students. The outcome indicator for SO2 is reduced by health-related absence. Positively, the percentage of students reporting absence in the past four weeks decreased by over 30 percent between baseline and midline. However, the fact that the proportion of these students indicating health-related reasons for absence has increased considerably highlights continued health-related barriers to attendance. Notably, students indicated diarrheal diseases were a primary reason for sickness-related illness at midline.

40. **Sustainability:** The ET recognizes that WFP is continuously working with the Ministry of Education as well as with the NSFD towards the objective of sustainability through capacity building. However, it is unrealistic to talk about transition to a national owned school meal project by the end of this phase of the McGovern-Dole project, even if an important step has been done regarding the creation and the support to the NSFD both at central and departmental level. Important factors outside capacity-building, such as political will and financial support, would also need to be addressed by the government to allow for a transition to national ownership. School level and community level capacity to support the project is also growing. However, WFP needs to be careful about asking communities to contribute too much to the project, since they were specifically targeted because they are poor and in need of assistance. It is therefore not sustainable to require major contributions from them such as filling the gap regarding fruits and vegetable in school meals or providing free labor for preparing meals.

Lessons learned

41. To reach SO1 based on improvement of literacy of pupils, WFP should ensure collaborative partnerships to allow WFP and its partners to play to their respective strengths. WFP's expertise in food distribution and close ties with the government provide strong support for the school feeding component. However, more attention needs to be paid to ensure stakeholders understanding the project logic to guarantee activities are designed and implemented in line with the objectives of the results framework.
42. Certain aspects of McGovern-Dole projects are not in total adherence with WFP policies. Two areas of concern have been discussed throughout the report i) the fact that McGovern-Dole projects prioritize imported food whilst WFP's policy promotes HGSF; ii) while the McGovern-Dole program does encourage remuneration of cooks, the McGovern-Dole project in the Republic of Congo relies on volunteer cooks, this does not align with WFP's policy on gender to promote the recognition for women's work.

Recommendations

43. The current McGovern-Dole project is coming to an end in July 2022. Realistically speaking, this leaves little time for WFP and its implementing partners to proceed with in-depth changes. However, recommendations could help improve project implementation and monitoring programming was to continue under a new McGovern-Dole agreement funding from 2022 until 2027. The ET proposes four operational recommendations, three strategic recommendations and one additional recommendation not directly related to this MTE but that should be taken into consideration for the final evaluation.

Operational recommendations

44. **Recommendation I:** WFP should work with implementing partners to develop clear definitions of PMP indicators and a common methodology for monitoring and reporting. The ET should undertake a review of past data with the CO to rectify any inconsistencies in reporting throughout the project implementation period. This will allow for a better evaluation of the effectiveness of the McGovern-Dole project for the final evaluation.
45. **Recommendation II:** WFP should prioritise resuming/starting capacity-building exercises that were postponed due to COVID-19. Specifically, activities targeted at building the human and physical capacity of School Feeding Services (SFS) (provision of motorbikes) and setting up a server for data storage at national level are needed. The planned international study trips to WFP's Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Cote D'Ivoire provides the NSFD with practical examples on how neighboring countries implement their school feeding projects which can be incorporated into government planning.
46. **Recommendation III:** WFP Congo should ensure that there is a complete infrastructure inventory of all McGovern-Dole assisted schools before the end of the project. This will allow realistic planning of all necessary infrastructure components that are needed to assure a healthy environment at the school premises.

47. **Recommendation IV:** WFP Congo, with support from Regional Bureau Johannesburg (RBJ), should develop clear guidance on curriculum promoting dietary diversity. This would include defining the concept of food groups as an indicator for dietary adequacy. There is need to establish a working group which will put dietary diversity at the centre of its discussions.

Strategic recommendations

48. **Recommendation V:** Regarding the McGovern-Dole project in Congo, WFP should ensure that an action plan is developed in order to ensure that the project activities also contribute to the objective of improving the literacy of school-age children.
49. **Recommendation VI:** WFP RBJ, with support from WFP HQ as necessary, should discuss with USDA the most appropriate ways to support school feeding in the region, with an emphasis on the growing interest in the home-grown school feeding model, which transfers cash to schools for local food purchase.
50. **Recommendation VII:** WFP Congo with support from RBJ, UNICEF and other partners as appropriate, should ensure that gender transformative approaches are an integral part of the primary school curriculum. The module has been developed already and is waiting to be rolled out. The same is true for a curriculum on food and nutrition. The current one needs to be adapted to the needs of primary schools.

4. Introduction

1.1. EVALUATION FEATURES

1. This report is for the mid-term activity evaluation of the World Food Project's (WFP) McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project in the Republic of Congo, based on the terms of reference (ToR – see Annex 1 in the second volume of this report) established by WFP and then on the inception report elaborated by the evaluation team in May 2021. The McGovern-Dole project is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) under the project number FFE-679-2017/020-00. The McGovern-Dole project started under WFP's Country Project 200648 and has been since integrated into WFP's Country Strategic Project (CSP) 2019-2024 under Strategic Outcome 2 on social protection. The evaluation is commissioned by the WFP Congo Country Office (CO) and will cover the period from September 2018 to May 2021. The evaluation is part of three interconnected exercises including a baseline study, which was carried out in 2018, this mid-term evaluation (MTE)¹⁴ and a final evaluation planned in 2022.
2. The mutually reinforcing objectives of the evaluation are:¹⁵
 - **Accountability for actions and results.** The objective is to evaluate the progress made towards achieving results, compared with the baseline, and assess whether progress results from actions taken and USDA resources utilized so far.
 - **Learning and adjusting based on lessons.** The MTE will determine the reasons why certain results were achieved or not. It will draw lessons, derive good practices and pointers for learning. This will inform operational and strategic decision-making, including any course correction measures required by WFP. To enhance learning, the baseline study made recommendations on the most efficient approach to monitor the project based on the indicators in the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). The MTE will also make recommendations on actions needed to strengthen and improve the project implementation for the remaining period. The evaluation seeks to assess the extent to which the school meals project addresses gender equality and equitable access by all vulnerable groups.
 - The MTE will also assess whether recommendations made during the baseline study were actioned and whether the recommendations were successful in strengthening project implementation.
 - The MTE will also track how effectively, and efficiently take-home rations were distributed between March and May 2020.
3. The expected users of the report are WFP (country office, regional bureau, headquarters, office of evaluation), the Government of the Republic of Congo, ministries associated with the McGovern-Dole project,¹⁶ sub-recipient partners which are the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ACTED¹⁷ and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), implementing partners, the FAS and USDA.
4. The evaluation was conducted by The KonTerra Group. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation was partly done remotely as the international team members did not travel to Congo. Two national evaluators led and coordinated the field work between May 17 and May 28, 2021. Quantitative data collection was done by the National Institute of Statistics (school surveys between

¹⁴ Due to the Covid-19 sanitation restriction, it was not possible to carry out the mid-term evaluation in 2020 as originally planned.

¹⁵ As stated in the terms of reference.

¹⁶ Ministry of Education (ministère de l'Enseignement primaire, secondaire et de l'Alphabétisation - MEPSA), the Ministry of Health (ministère de la Santé et de la Population - MSP), Ministry of Agriculture (ministère de la l'Agriculture, de l'Élevage et de la Pêche - MAEP) and the Ministry of Social affaires (ministère des Affaires sociales et de l'Action humanitaire - MASAH).

¹⁷ A French non-governmental organisation that works in international solidarity.

May 10 and May 20) and the PASEC (literacy test between June 7 and June 11). Qualitative data collection was done by the evaluation team, both locally and remotely, during the months of May and June 2021.

1.2. CONTEXT

5. “Congo-Brazzaville is said to be the cradle of the Société des ambianceurs et des personnes élégantes, known as the art of SAPE,¹⁸ this is a way of dressing, being and behaving, some even call it art, based on non-violence. In the words of the Congolese writer Alain Mabanckou, “SAPE is also a symbol of freedom and social protest”.
6. The Republic of Congo is also known as Congo-Brazzaville, differentiating it from Congo-Kinshasa, the other name of its neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. The Republic of the Congo is divided into 12 administrative divisions, 10 provinces and two cities: Brazzaville, its capital city, and Pointe Noire. This Central African country has a population of nearly four million¹⁹ and a life expectancy of 65.1 years.²⁰ The 2020 Human Development Report²¹ ranks the Republic of Congo as a medium human development country with a Planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index (PHDI)²² of 0.567 and ranked 147 out of 189 countries on the standard HDI. According to the latest Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2015-2017),²³ the subjective well-being of the population in 2015 reveals that most of the population are generally satisfied (82.6 percent) with their lives, and happy (84 percent), and 45.75 percent believe that their lives had improved over the past year and that this improvement is expected to continue over the next year.
7. In early 2020, Congo was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. From February 2020 until 17 July 2021, there have been 12,933 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 172 deaths reported to the World Health Organization (WHO). As of 12 July 2021, a total of 90,880 vaccine doses have been administered.²⁴
8. **Political and economic context:** Since its independence in 1960, the political history of the Congo has been turbulent. The country endured numerous civil wars from 1993 to 1999, which left it economically, financially and socially exhausted. Over the past 15 years, the political situation in the country has been relatively stable. Denis Sassou-Nguesso, president from 1979 to 1992 and again since 1997, was re-elected in March 2021. This is his second mandate since the establishment of the new constitution in 2015.
9. Congo is a lower middle-income country whose economy suffered greatly because of the 2014 oil shock and is yet to recover to the same level. The gross domestic product (GDP) fell from USD 18 billion (2014) to USD 10 billion (2016), before rising (13.6 billion in 2018) and falling again to 12.7 billion in 2019.²⁵ In July 2019, after more than two years of negotiations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) granted a three-year USD 448.8 million loan to revive the country's economy.²⁶ However, COVID-19 has further damaged the economy, with the GDP falling to 10.9 billion in 2020.²⁷

18 Literal translation: The Society of Ambiance-Makers and Elegant People.

19 Politique nationale de sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle ; 2017.

20 Project des Nations unies pour le développement ; Indices et indicateurs de développement humain ; 2018.

21 UNDP; Human Development Report 2020, The next frontier: Human development and the Anthropocene; 2020

22 The Planetary pressures-adjusted Human Development Index adjusts the standard HDI by a country's level of carbon dioxide emissions and material footprint, each on a per capita basis.

23 Ministère de la Planification et de l'intégration et UNICEF ; Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples MICS Congo 2014-2015 ; Novembre 2015.

24 WHO, <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/cg> (accessed on 18 July 2021)

25 World Bank data available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=CG>

26 IMF, IMF Country Report No. 19/244, July 2019

27 Ibid.

10. **Poverty and food security:** The most recent poverty data is a decade old, from 2011, when the proportion of the population living below the poverty line was 41 percent.²⁸ At the time, the Gini coefficient was 48.9 (2011) indicating high levels of inequality of income and wealth.^{29, 30}
11. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), approximately 1.5 million people were undernourished between 2017 and 2019.³¹ Congo has vast uncultivated arable land, representing one third of its total area.³² The country imports the majority of its agricultural produce,³³ leaving the population almost totally dependent on food imports. Food insecurity in the country stems from limited agricultural productivity, widespread vulnerability, recurrent social and political conflict and gender inequalities.³⁴ From 2006 there was a considerable improvement in food security, until the oil shock of 2014 when food security started to deteriorate. In 2018, the prevalence of undernourishment³⁵ was 28 percent.³⁶ The Global Hunger Index 2020 indicates “serious” levels of hunger (rating of 26.0).³⁷
12. **Health and nutrition:** As with poverty data, the latest nutrition data is relatively old, from the 2014/15 multi-indicator cluster survey (MICS). The data is still presented here for context, although it may no longer reflect the current situation. The MICS (2014/2015)³⁸ found that stunting affects 21.2 percent of children under five (“high”)³⁹. However, there are significant regional differences amongst the seven intervention departments. Lekoumou had a prevalence rate of 34.2 percent (“very high”) whereas Bouenza and Pool and Cuvette had significantly lower levels (23.3, 23.0 and 21.5 percent respectively – all “high”). Stunted children will never reach full physical and cognitive potential, contributing to poor school performance results. The MICS also found a wasting (acute malnutrition) rate of 8.2 percent for children under five (“medium”) including 2.6 percent with severe wasting. Wasting is inadequately addressed, which exposes almost 70,000 children under five to risk of death every year. According to the Strategic Framework Against Malnutrition in Congo,⁴⁰ micronutrient deficiency was a significant problem in the country. The MICS also found that two thirds (66.7 percent) of children under five years suffer from iron deficiency anemia. For women of childbearing age, the anemic prevalence is 55 percent, 58 percent for pregnant women and 52 percent for lactating women.
13. To address nutritional deficiencies, the government of Congo, through the Ministry of Industrial Development and Promotion of the Private Sector,⁴¹ created the National Commission for the Fortification of Food⁴² in May 2012. In 2013, Congo committed to the Scaling up Nutrition movement. In 2015, the government put in place the Strategic Framework Against Malnutrition in Congo –

28 World Bank data available at <https://data.worldbank.org/country/congo-rep>

29 The Gini coefficient is a statistical measure intended to represent the income inequality or wealth inequality within a nation or any other group of people. As points of comparison: OECD countries scored 24-49% (1992-2018); in 2008/9 South Africa had the world's highest Gini score of 63%.

30 <http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Economy/Inequality/GINI-index> (accessed on March 4, 2021).

31 FAO, <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en - country/46>, (accessed on April 6, 2021).

32 FAO, <http://www.fao.org/congo/notre-bureau/congo-en-un-coup-doeil/en/>, (accessed on April 6, 2021)

33 FAO; Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture: La République du Congo en un coup d'œil | FAO en République du Congo | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (accessed on November 26, 2021)

34 WFP, Congo Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023), February 2019.

35 Undernourishment is 'a state, lasting for at least one year, of inability to acquire enough food, defined as a level of food intake insufficient to meet dietary energy requirements'.

36 World Bank data available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SN.ITK.DEFC.ZS?locations=CG>

37 The evaluation team (ET) did not find any departmental-level data on poverty and food security. The indigenous population (hunter-gatherers), living mainly in the departments of Likouala and Sangha, represents eight percent of the population and are the poorest and most vulnerable segment of the national population. Official figures estimate the indigenous population of less than two percent of the total population. However, according to many sources, the figure is much higher (up to 10 percent).

38 UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/congo/survie-et-développement-de-lenfant/nutrition> (accessed on April 27, 2021).

39 Classification as per World Health Organization. Available at <https://apps.who.int/nutrition/landscape/help.aspx?menu=0&helpid=391&lang=EN>

40 Republic of Congo. 2015. Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la malnutrition au Congo – Horizon 2025.

41 Ministère du Développement industriel et de la Promotion du secteur privé.

42 Commission nationale pour la fortification alimentaire (CNFA).

Horizon 2025.⁴³ Its objective is to reduce by at least 50 percent the prevalence of all forms of malnutrition regarding vulnerable populations, especially for children between 0 and 59 months, pregnant women and lactating women in Congo by 2025.

14. The Congolese also face many other health challenges. In 2019, the top 10 causes of death were mainly communicable, maternal, neonatal and nutritional diseases, with HIV/AIDS being the leading cause.⁴⁴ Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are key areas to control the outbreak of communicable diseases. The MICS (2014/15) showed very different results on access to clean drinking water for the departments under the McGovern-Dole project. Whilst in Bouenza and Cuvette 72.0 percent and 76.6 percent of the households had access to a protected water source, the prevalence in Lekoumou, Pool and Plateaux was only 40.9 percent, 44.9 percent and 54.2 percent, respectively.⁴⁵ According to the Demographic and health survey (DHS) 2011/12, the prevalence of diarrheal diseases⁴⁶ was lowest in the Pool department (9.6 percent) and highest in Lekoumou (22.5 percent).
15. **Education:** The education system in Congo is weak, with low performance in education access, quality, efficiency and achievement. According to the comparative international evaluation organized by the Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries (CONFEMEN)⁴⁷ to which Congo participated in 2019, only 58.4 percent of students starting grade 6 achieve minimum acceptable scores in French (literacy) and only 33.4 percent reach the minimum acceptable level in mathematics (numeracy) at the end of primary school.⁴⁸ Despite public education being free for children aged 6 to 19 years, many families, especially indigenous people and smallholder farmers, cannot afford the associated costs of a child's enrolment in school. Latest enrolment data (2018) shows that rates of girls (80.8 percent) and boys (82.6 percent) are similar at the primary level,⁴⁹ but important differences appear after age 17, with only 66 percent of girls enrolled compared to 76 percent of boys.⁵⁰ The Government conducted a substantial revision of its Education Sector Strategy (2015-2025)⁵¹ to address these gaps. The strategy consists of three major themes: providing quality education for all, responding to the need for quality human resources in an emerging economy, and creating a well-performing education system.⁵²
16. **School feeding:** In December 2017, a presidential decree established the National School Feeding Directorate (Direction de l'alimentation scolaire - DAS) within the Ministry of Preschool, Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education, Youth and Civil Education (Ministère de l'Enseignement préscolaire, primaire et secondaire et de l'Alphabétisation: MEPPSA). A director was nominated in April 2018. The role of this directorate is to coordinate and follow-up the activities related to all school meals project in the country. WFP is reinforcing the capacities of this directorate by providing technical as well as material support.
17. For the 2018/19 school year (SY), the Government of the Republic of Congo contributed 48 metric tonnes (MT) of salt and XAF⁵³ five million (USD 8,600) in operation costs for the WFP school meals

43 Cadre stratégique de lutte contre la malnutrition au Congo - Horizon 2025.

44 <http://www.healthdata.org/congo>

45 MICS (2014/2015) : <https://www.unicef.org/congo/rapports/enqu%C3%Aates-par-grappes-%C3%A0-indicateurs-multiples-mics5-2014-2015> (accessed on November 26,2021)

46 Prevalence of diarrhoeal diseases was calculated over the last 14 days of the interviewee.

47 Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie.

48 PASEC2019 Qualité des systèmes éducatifs en Afrique subsaharienne francophone – Performances et environnement de l'enseignement-apprentissage au primaire, CONFEMEN.

49 <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/cg>

50 WFP, Congo Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023), February 2019.

51 <https://www.unicef.org/congo/rapports/strat%C3%A9gie-sectorielle-de-leducation-2015-2025>

52 Strategy themes include (a) providing quality education for all, with a focus on a basic education cycle of 10 years and on moving toward universal access to pre-schooling, especially in rural areas; enhancing access to informal education and literacy services for youth and adults, including second chance education; (b) responding to the need for quality human resources in an emerging economy, with a focus on creating quality schools, establishing a newly reformed technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, and improving the relevance of higher education; and (c) creating a well-performing education system, with a focus on improved institutional management, enhanced human resource management, and better management of financial resources and statistics, planning and strategy, and crises and emergencies.

53 African Financial Community Franc

activities. This was the government's first contribution to school meals since the government stopped contributing to WFP's school feeding projects after the economic crises in 2016.

18. The importance of introducing locally produced agricultural products was articulated in the newly developed action plan for the implementation of the National School Feeding Policy. In collaboration with the DAS, WFP and its partners continue promoting Home-Grown School Feeding (HGFSF).
19. "Share the Meal" is a global WFP fund-raising application⁵⁴ launched in 2015 to receive donations to help reduce world hunger. Using funds from Share the Meal and a private donor, WFP has established HGFSF pilots in five schools in the Pool region, where cooks receive coupons to buy products in local markets and shops. The meals prepared for the children are entirely local and in accordance with food preferences of the students (cassava in different preparations, local vegetables prepared with salted fish). While separate from the McGovern-Dole project, this pilot HGFSF project promotes an alternative, cash-based modality for school feeding. WFP Congo is advocating to mobilise financial resources to extend the project to other localities.
20. **Gender:** Congo is ranked 144th out of 166 on the 2020 Gender Inequality Index⁵⁵ with little improvement since 2000. In education, the latest gender parity index for school enrolment differs significantly between primary (1.07) and secondary (0.67) levels. Lower access to secondary education for girls is especially pronounced in rural areas and amongst the poorest households. Some of the main factors are teenage pregnancies (112 births per 1000 women aged 15 – 19 years) as well as household economic constraints.⁵⁶
21. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a critical issue with high rates and high social acceptance. GBV reports from DHS 2011/12 and MICS 2014/2015 do not offer comparable results. Whilst the DHS reported that 73.1 percent of women believe that men have the right to beat them, they asked for eight reasons including going out of the house without telling the husband, denial of sex, neglecting childcare and spending money without notification. The same report shows that the number of men justifying GBV was even higher (75.8 percent). This percentage rose for younger men (50.3 percent of men aged 45 to 49; 75.8 percent for boys aged 15 to 19). The MICS survey investigated only five instead of eight reasons and reported that 54.2 percent of all women agreed to GBV if one of the five reasons were met, whilst only 40 percent of men justified GBV against their wives. There is the same tendency that young men especially (15–19 years) justify GBV (62.4 percent). This shows the importance of working with school age children on gender transformative topics. There is also some evidence that GBV may be an issue impeding womens safe access to education.⁵⁷
22. **National policies and strategic frameworks:** The National Development Plan (PND 2018-2022) lays out the president's vision and gives a strategic and multisectoral framework. It put forward three strategic priorities; a) strengthening governance, b) in-depth reform of the education system and c) training, and diversification of the national economy, with particular emphasis on agriculture and tourism.⁵⁸ However, the PND must integrate and accommodate the major constraint of the state's over-indebtedness, which restricts its capacity to further stimulate the economy and finance grand ambitions.⁵⁹
23. **Sustainable Development Goals:** The Republic of Congo signed up to the Millennium Declaration in 2000 to agree to eradicate poverty, improve the access of the most vulnerable populations to education, health care, etc., through the achievement of the eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015. However, the objectives could not be achieved. In 2015, the Republic of Congo signed up to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which it intends to operationalise through the PND 2018-2022. With the technical and financial support of the United Nations Development Project

54 <https://sharethemeal.org/en/index.html>

55 UNDP. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index> (accessed on April 27, 2021)

56 World Bank Report: Country partnership Framework for the Republic of Congo 2020 - 2024

57 <https://en.unesco.org/news/gender-based-violence-schools-significant-barrier-right-education>

58 Republic of Congo ; Plan national de développement, Cadre stratégique de développement : Document central ; page 3.

59 Ibid, forward page 6.

(UNDP), the country endorsed the 2030 Agenda objectives in December 2016.⁶⁰ Through its Country Strategic Plan (CSP), WFP will contribute significantly to the interventions and planned results of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2020–2024, which identifies SDG 2 on zero hunger and 17 on partnerships as foundational drivers of long-term, sustainable development in the Congo.⁶¹

24. **Other international assistance:** The World Bank operates in Congo under the *Projet d'Appui à l'Amélioration du Système Éducatif (PRAASED)*,⁶² a project whose objective is to support the improvement of the educational system. There are no other major school feeding actors in Congo. Until 2017, the Institute for Philanthropy and Humanitarian Development (IPDH) was the main actor, implementing the McGovern-Dole project since 2002. During SY 2014-2015, WFP and IPHD covered 41.8 percent of primary school feeding needs.⁶³
25. The McGovern-Dole sub-recipients all implement various other activities in Congo. ACTED has been working in Congo since 1997 and focuses its activities on a multisectoral approach to fight poverty and inequalities, including local authorities and communities. ACTED supports farmers to grow, stock, transport and sell their production through training, support of farmer associations, microfinance, etc. UNICEF has been in Congo since the 1960s. UNICEF's goal is that by 2024, Congolese children, both boys and girls, will have significantly improved access to equitable and quality services.⁶⁴ UNESCO is involved in the educational sector, and together with the Ministry of Higher Education and UNICEF, it has participated in the joint review of the education sector in Congo of the Education Sector Strategy (*Stratégie sectorielle de l'éducation 2015-2025*) in December 2019.
26. **Humanitarian issues and key external events:** The main external event during the implementation of this project is the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic reached the Republic of Congo, the Government made decisions to limit the spread of the disease, including the closure of all schools and the confinement of the population at home (March to May 2020). These measures had a large impact on the WFP's operations, including the suspension of school feeding as school canteens were closed. To prevent a deterioration of the nutritional status of schoolchildren, WFP introduced take-home rations (THR) with the agreement from USDA. During the school closure, 75,081 children received the equivalent of three months of dry rations (April, May, June 2020) to take home.⁶⁵

1.3. SUBJECT BEING EVALUATED

27. The McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project is a school-based project of literacy, and nutrition and health, including school feeding. It is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS).
28. **Timing:** Over a period of five years (2017-2022), USDA has allocated a budget of USD 30,022,053 for donations of commodities and funding of ocean transportation and other authorised expenses to WFP during U.S. fiscal years (FY) 2018-2022 under the authority of the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition project.
29. The project agreement between the FAS and WFP was signed on 29 September 2017. The official start of the project took place in Brazzaville on 1 March 2018 with a signed agreement between the Minister of Primary, Secondary Education and Literacy, the Ambassador of the United States of America and WFP's Country Director. The first project activities were then delayed until September 2018 due to the

60 The 2030 Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It recognises that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. The interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs are of crucial importance in ensuring that the purpose of the 2030 Agenda is realised.

61 This framework describes how UN Country Teams will contribute to the achievement of development results based on a common country analysis and UN comparative advantage.

62 *Projet d'appui à l'amélioration du système éducatif*

63 According to the National School Feeding Policy, page 19 WFP was covering 15.3% whilst IPHD was covering 26.5% of needs.

64 UNICEF; <https://www.unicef.org/congo/ce-que-nous-faisons> (accessed on the 16 April 2021)

65 WFP, ACR 2020. The ration was composed of the same food pupils received at school.

late arrival of overseas commodities (food). Project activities started under the previous WFP Country Project 200648 and, since July 2019, comes under the new CSP (2019-2023). As the project started after a one-year delay, it will now run over four school years (SY 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22) instead of the five originally planned, finishing as agreed at the end of school year 2021/22.

30. The MTE was originally planned for 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It covers the period from September 2018 – June 2021.
31. **Geographic scope and target population:** The McGovern-Dole project is implemented in seven different departments, namely Pool, Plateaux, Cuvette, Bouenza, Lekoumou, Likouala and Sangha (see map in Annex 2). The beneficiaries are primary school pupils from grades one to six. In the departments of Sangha and Likouala, a special emphasis has been put on the indigenous population in the Observe, React and Act (ORA)⁶⁶ schools. Those schools give indigenous children the opportunity to follow a three-year school project that eventually enables them to integrate into the public system at the beginning of the third year of primary school.
32. In 2018, the total number of McGovern-Dole beneficiaries was 54,000 pupils (from which 3,791 are indigenous pupils mainly in ORA schools) in 318 schools. By 2020, the project reached 75,000 pupils (from which 4,510 are from the indigenous population) in 354 schools. This already exceeds the planned target for year five of 68,870 pupils. More detail on beneficiary numbers is given in the finding section.
33. **WFP's Country Strategic Plan:** The McGovern-Dole project is implemented under WFP's CSP through Strategic Outcome (SO) 2: Equitable national social protection interventions effectively target vulnerable populations, including school-age children, with sustained access to safe and nutritious food.⁶⁷ Two main activities are incorporated into this strategic outcome: (a) Provide safe, adequate and nutritious school meals to targeted schoolchildren and (b) Provide technical support to the Government for improved implementation of shock-responsive social protection interventions.
34. In addition, the project provides support to establishing/strengthening local agriculture in order to develop home-grown school feeding projects. This falls under the CSP's SO 3: Targeted smallholder farmers and communities benefit from productive and sustainable livelihoods that support nutrition value chains. Its activity is to provide smallholder farmers with analytical and technical support and equipment aimed at encouraging market-oriented and climate-resilient production and livelihoods.⁶⁸
35. **Objectives and activities:** McGovern-Dole projects have two Strategic Objectives (SOs) which are "Improved Literacy of School-Age Children" (SO1) and "Increased Use of Improved Health and Dietary Practices" (SO2). As stated in the project agreement between FAS and WFP, the McGovern-Dole project will pursue five main objectives:⁶⁹
 - Improve literacy of school-aged children.
 - Increase use of health and dietary practices.
 - Increase capacity of government institutions.
 - Improve policy and regulatory framework.
 - Increase government support and engagement of local organisation and community groups.
36. To reach these objectives, a total of eight activities have been planned⁷⁰ (see Annex 3 for details about each activity):

⁶⁶ In French: Observer, Réfléchir, Agir.

⁶⁷ WFP, CSP 2019-2023, page 11.

⁶⁸ WFP; Congo Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023) ; February 2019

⁶⁹ Project Agreement Between the Foreign Agricultural Service and the World Food Project for the Donation of Agricultural Commodities and Related Assistance Under the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project, Sept 2017.

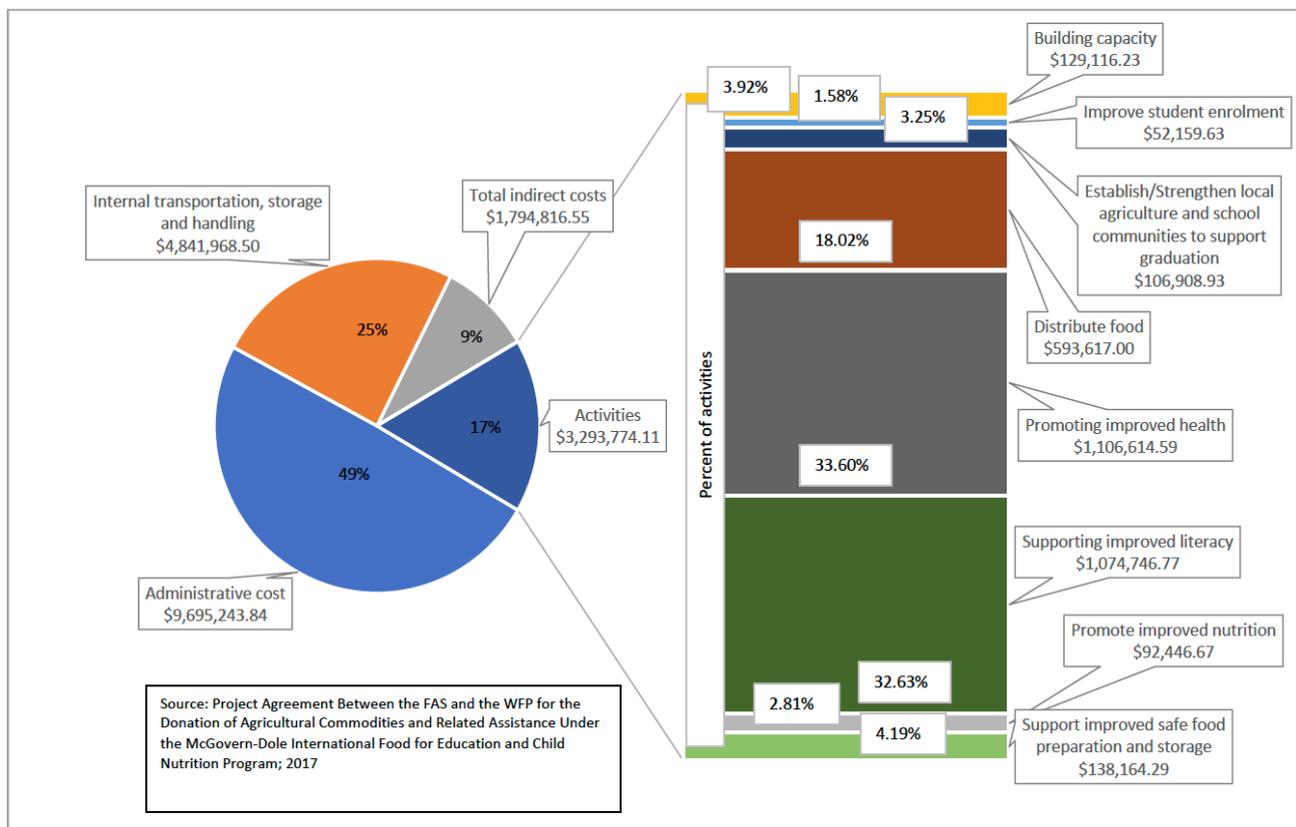
⁷⁰ From the ToR, pages 5 and 6 and Project Agreement Between FSA and WFP, pages 21-24.

- **Activity 1:** Building capacity by supporting the implementation of the Systems Assessment for Better Education Results (SABER) action plan and Government National School Feeding Policy (NSFP).
- **Activity 2:** Improve student enrolment by raising awareness of the importance of education.
- **Activity 3:** Establish/Strengthen local agriculture and school communities to support graduation through the implementation of the national home-grown school feeding project.
- **Activity 4:** Distribute food to provide school meals to children⁷¹.
- **Activity 5:** Promote improved health by building/rehabilitating latrines; building and rehabilitating water stations and hand-washing kits; and deworming.
- **Activity 6:** Support improved literacy by distributing school supplies; supporting revision of the national curriculum, distribution and training on the revised curriculum; promoting teacher attendance; training of teachers; and training of school administrators and officials.
- **Activity 7:** Promote improved nutrition by training and raising awareness of good health and hygiene practices; and training and raising awareness on the importance of improved nutrition, health and dietary practices.
- **Activity 8:** Support improved safe food preparation and storage by building and rehabilitating kitchens and storerooms; and providing energy saving stoves and kitchen utensils.

37. **Budget:** The USD 30,022,053 budget provided by USDA through FAS is split as follows:

- USD 5,620,250 for commodity cost (food provided by USDA).
- USD 4,776,000 for international freight cost.
- USD 19,625,803 for project operations as split in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Overview of the project operation costs of the USDA McGovern-Dole project (2017-2022) (USD)



⁷¹ The MoU signed between WFP and FAS states that the project will distribute approximately 9,950 metric tonnes of school meals such as vegetable oil, split yellow peas and fortified rice and that the meals would be supplemented by iodized salt provided by the Government of Congo and canned fish provided by Japan.

38. Within the project operational budget, USD 1,074,746 had been specifically allocated to Strategic Objective 1 (Improved Literacy of School-Aged Children), and USD 1,199,060 had been allocated to the Strategic Objective 2 (Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices).⁷²
39. For comparison purposes, the total estimated budget of the CSP until 2022 (end of the McGovern-Dole project) was USD 82,584,401. In 2018, the McGovern-Dole project represented 36 percent of the overall CSP budget. In 2019 and 2020, expenditure related to the McGovern-Dole project represented respectively 25.7 percent and 16.3 percent of overall expenditure.⁷³
40. **Outputs (Planned vs. Actual):** All McGovern-Dole projects summarise outputs and outcome indicators in the Project Monitoring Plan (PMP). These indicators are reported in the indicator tracking table (ITT) of the SAPRs. In the PMP for the Congo McGovern-Dole project, 17 output standard indicators (imposed by the project) and 8 output custom indicators (added by the country office) are listed. Baseline values and yearly targets for each indicator were reviewed during the baseline exercise in April/July 2018 and the ITT was reviewed and finalised by WFP in October 2019. This final ITT is the tool used to assess the project achievement up to this MTE.
41. Twice a year, the WFP CO reports to USDA to update on progress towards targets through semiannual performance reports (SAPR). Those figures have been compiled by the ET into a consolidated indicator tracking table (ITT) of the PMP indicators relevant for the RoC McGovern Dole project in Annex 4 allowing a direct comparison of yearly targets against the overall project target. Comments made by WFP are also added for better understanding of the rationale. As the feeding component of the project began one year late, the yearly targets for year one, have in most cases not been reached. In addition to the ITT in the SAPR, WFP also collects data to feed into their annual reports (Standard Project Reports (SPR) until 2018 and Annual Country Reports (ACR) since 2019).⁷⁴ For more insight and clarity, the evaluation team also provides some of this data, even if it is not compulsory for a McGovern-Dole evaluation.
42. Due to the large number of indicators, it is not possible to describe all the planned and actual outputs in this section of the report. However, all indicators are reviewed through the report.
43. **Food delivered:** Amongst its activities, the McGovern-Dole project planned to distribute food to school canteens including fortified rice, canned fish, iodised salt, vegetable oil, beans, split peas and cassava flour. While rice, split peas and vegetable oil are directly shipped from the United States of America, iodised salt is provided by the Government of Congo and canned fish by Japan. Beans were purchased locally by WFP using McGovern Dole funds as planned in the design of the project. Fortified cassava was also supposed to be bought locally, however this has not happened. Food distributed versus food planned increased from 29.7 percent in 2018 to 63.8 percent in 2020 (see Table 2 below).

⁷² According to the USDA handbook on indicators, examples of health and dietary (nutrition) practices include: incorporating child health, nutrition and hygiene into a school curriculum, practices supporting dietary diversity, practices supporting proper handwashing at critical times, diarrhea treatment and management, sanitation practices (i.e., solid waste collection and management, safe water treatment and storage, etc.) and preventative health practices (i.e., administering deworming medication and micronutrient supplements, where applicable)

⁷³ Figures have been extracted from the Annual Financial Overview tables in the ACRs 2019 and 2020. Have been taken into consideration the figures under “Equitable national social protection interventions effectively target vulnerable populations, including school-aged children, with sustained access to safe and nutritious food”.

⁷⁴ The Country Strategic Plan (CSP), defines WFP's role in the country, encompassing the entire portfolio of activities and linking them to the WFP Strategic Plan at the corporate level. The ACR is produced annually by WFP COs consisting of information on: i) the country context and operations; ii) financial overview and expenditures, iii) progress reports on each Strategic Outcome; iv) an indicator progress report; v) crosscutting results on gender, protection, AAP and environment. Indicators within the ACR are aligned with WFP's Corporate Results Framework (CRF). ACRs are published on WFP's website. The CSP in Republic of the Congo began in 2019. Prior to this, activities were still organized and reported on only at project level. Thus, the 2018 data is from the Standard Project Reports (SPRs) which were prepared on an annual basis by COs for each operational project. Starting in 2019, this data was organized into ACRs for reporting under the CSP.

Table 2: Food distribution planned versus food distributed (country office targets)⁷⁵

	SPR 2018			ACR 2019			ACR 2020		
	Planned*	Delivered	Planned vs Delivered	Planned*	Delivered	Planned vs Delivered	Planned*	Delivered	Planned vs Delivered
Fortified rice	2,320	750	32.3%	2,093	1256	60.0%	1,958	1333	68.1%
Canned fish	468	88	18.8%	419	124	29.6%	392	162	41.3%
Iodised salt	78	22	28.2%	70	45	64.3%	65	10	15.4%
Vegetable oil	234	64	27.4%	209	177	84.7%	196	148	75.5%
Beans	170	12	7.1%	56	30	53.6%	52	0	0.0%
Split peas	454	175	38.5%	502	316	62.9%	470	347	73.8%
Cassava flour	20	0	0.0%	Non-planned			Non-planned		
Total per year	3,744	1,111	29.7%	3,349	1,948	58.2%	3,133	2,000	63.8%

Gand total	10,226	5,059	49.5%
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* Figures are given in tonnes
Sources: WFP, SPR 2018, ACR 2019 & ACR 2020

44. **Meals provided:** One of the standard McGovern Dole output indicators is the number of daily school meals s provided (standard indicator #15). According to the SAPR during the second year of implementation, 75 percent of planned meals were delivered and during the third year, WFP provided 115 percent of planned meals (Table 3 below).

Table 3: School meals planned versus delivered

St.ind.#15. Number of daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) provided to school-age children as a result of USDA assistance								
Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached
9,675,000	0	0%	10,828,980	8,133,994	75%	11,587,009	13,322,954	115%

Sources: WFP, SAPR

45. **School meals beneficiaries.** According to the project targets, WFP planned to assist 53,750 primary school children the first year, increasing each year to reach 73,700 pupils by the end of the project in 362 schools situated in the seven targeted departments. However, the achievements reported in the ITT seem to be incorrect as they exceed enrolment numbers within the targeted schools (see Figure 4). Importantly, WFP considers a beneficiary as anyone receiving at least one school meal. The indicator is not meant to specify pupils benefitting from a certain number of meals throughout the school year (see discussion in Effectiveness section below).

⁷⁵ The tonnage of food delivered is not included as an indicator in the PMP. The ACR data includes some food delivered outside of McGovern Dole funding. However, the evaluation matrix notes use of the ACRs for triangulating data..

Table 4: School meals beneficiaries planned versus reached

Sources: WFP Semi-annual performance reports (SAPR) to USDA

St. Ind # 16 (pupils benefiting from the project)								
Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached
53,750	0	0%	60,161	134,056	222%	64,372	157,642	244%

46. **School facilities built and rehabilitated:** As sub-recipients, ACTED and UNICEF planned to rehabilitate and construct sanitation facilities and school canteens in a certain number of schools. Whilst the latrine objectives were reached, monitoring data indicates that no school canteens have been constructed nor rehabilitated at the time of the MTE (see Table 5 below). In the final evaluation, the ET will seek further feedback from the implementing partners to understand barriers to activity achievement.

Table 5: School facilities planned versus constructed

	St.ind.#7. Number of school facilities rehabilitated and constructed.								
	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached
Latrines by ACTED	No disaggregated data found			24	24	100%	20	20	100%
Latrines by UNICEF	No disaggregated data found			5	6	120%	7	16	229%
Kitchens with storage by ACTED	0	0	-	20	0	0%	2	0	0%
Total	18	25	139%	49	30	61%	29	36	124%

Grand total	96	91	95%
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Sources: WFP SAPR narratives and ITTs

47. **Child health and nutrition & safe food preparation and storage:** McGovern-Dole SO2 concerns the increased use of “Improved Health, Nutrition and Dietary Practices”. This outcome is supported by training on child health and nutrition (standard indicators #18 and #20 on individual training, see Table 6 below). The achievement of this outcome is further investigated in the findings section.

Table 6: Planned training versus actual training

Standard indicators directly related to the second McGovern-Dole strategic objective.									
	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached
St.Ind.#18: Number of individuals trained in child health and nutrition	591	0	0%	4,210	0	0%	3,882	60	1,5%
St.Ind.#20: Number of individuals trained in safe food preparation and storage	960	0	0%	2,901	338	12%	3,300	1,203	36%

Sources: WFP semi-annual performance report (SAPR) ITT

48. **Schools using an improved water source & improved sanitation facilities:** The value of these indicators as reported in the SAPR ITT does not seem to be correct. For example, for the output indicator of schools having access to improved sanitation facilities, the indicator is reported as the number of latrines built instead of the number of schools in which latrines have been built. The table below has attempted to rectify these figures by gathering additional information from the SAPR narrative. While the figures show that the targets for improved water sources seem to be reached, the target regarding improved sanitation reach only 65 percent. This is further investigated in the findings section.

Table 7: Schools using improved water sources and sanitation facilities (planned versus reached)

Standard indicators related to schools using an improved water source & improved sanitation facilities.									
	Year 1			Year 2			Year 3		
	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached	Planned	Reached	Planned vs. Reached
St.Ind.#22: Schools using an improved water source. Baseline: 110	115*	115	100%	124	124	100%	135	135	100%
Std. Ind. #23: Schools using improved sanitation. Baseline: 113	119	120	101%	170	129	76%	197	129	65%

* This indicates that WFP plans to reach an additional five schools (115 - baseline value).

Sources: SAPR narratives and ITTs

49. **Gender-related outputs:** Gender disaggregated data is not provided in the SAPR ITTs that WFP sends to USDA. The baseline exercise proposed to add an additional indicator that measures the increase of the percentage of females in school feeding committees having a lead position. This indicator has been added to the PMP but has not yet been monitored. The MTE reported on this indicator through the school surveys.
50. **Outcomes (Planned Vs. Actual):** USDA-supported activities are intended to improve the academic performance of schoolchildren (literacy) and the use of health, nutrition and dietary practices. As such, the PMP also presents eight standard outcome indicators. The indicators directly measuring these outcomes are:
 - The percentage of pupils (disaggregated by sex) who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade-level text. This is standard indicator number 26 and directly measures SO1.
 - The number of individuals who demonstrate the use of new child health and nutrition practices. This is standard indicator number 19 and directly measures SO2.
 - The number of individuals who demonstrate the use of new safe food preparation and storage practices which in the standard indicator number 21 and directly measures SO2.
51. The PASEC team, under the leadership of the Director of Primary Education (DEP) within the Ministry of Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education, Youth and Civil Education (MEPPSA), measured the first outcome (indicator 26)⁷⁶ during the data collection phase through the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) that was conducted in 80 schools to 1,600 second grade pupils.
52. Outcome indicators 19 and 21 are directly linked in the project results framework to output indicators number 18 and 20 (see Table 6 above). The SAPR narrative does not mention any information about

⁷⁶ In the most recent USDA handbook on standard indicators, this indicator is now the first indicator instead of the 26th of the former version. However, the ET will use the former numbering of indicators throughout the whole project evaluation.

either of those indicators and no data is reported in the ITTs. The USDA indicator handbook provides guidelines of the behaviors and targeted individuals for which this indicator applies. However, there is a need to further define the target population and the methodology for measurement. Indeed, measurement of these indicators would be difficult, as they imply assessing whether beneficiaries put in practice what they have learnt.

53. Out of the eight outcome indicators presented in the PMP, the CO has only been reporting one of them in the ITTs: - the value of new public and private sector investments leveraged as a result of USDA assistance. The other 7 do not appear in any semi-annual reports. "Baseline, yearly targets and achievements are compiled in Annex 4 and 5, although there are some inconsistencies in how these are reported. For example, standard indicator number 3, which should be a percentage of standard indicator number 4, is incorrect.⁷⁷ Though no figures were reported for outcomes 19 and 21, the fact that targets were higher than the related output indicators (18 and 20) indicate a similar issue in calculation of these indicators.
54. The SPR 2018 and the ACRs 2019 and 2020 provide additional outcome indicators regarding attendance rates, drop-out rates, enrolment rates, gender ratio and pass rates. Importantly, these are not standard McGovern-Dole indicators, nor were they included as custom indicators in the ITT for reporting to USDA. Targets and reporting cycles of the ACRs are not aligned with USDA reporting schedules. The inclusion of these indicators is provided to shed light on the context and outcomes either directly or indirectly aligned with the McGovern Dole Results Framework as presented in Table 8 below. The decline of all these outcome indicators in 2020 is due to the COVID-19 crisis school closures.

⁷⁷ St.ind.#3: Number of school administrators and officials in target schools who demonstrate use of new techniques or tools as a result of USDA assistance ; and St.ind.#4 : Number of school administrators and officials trained or certified as a result of USDA assistance.

Table 8: Attendance, drop-outs, enrolment, pass retention rates and gender ratio (Country Office targets)⁷⁸

		SPR 2018		ACR 2019		ACR 2020		End-CSP target
		Baseline	follow-up	target	follow-up	target	follow-up	
Attendance rate	Female	=98	86.81	=100	93.27	≥93.27	80.09	=95
	Male	=98	87.23	=100	93.67	≥93.67	79.33	=95
	Overall	=98	86.62	=100	93.48	≥93.48	79.68	=95
Drop-out rate	Female	=2	14.8	=0.5	2.6	≤2.6	0.45	≤0.4
	Male	=2	12.96	=0.5	2.8	≤2.8	0.43	≤0.4
	Overall	=2	13.88	=0.5	2.27	≤2.27	0.44	≤0.4
Enrolment rate	Female	≥6	3.2	≥7	5.77	≥5.77	-12.81	≥10
	Male	≥6	11.7	≥7	5.83	≥5.83	19.81	≥10
	Overall	≥6	7	≥7	5.8	≥5.8	-6.33	≥10
Gender ratio	Overall	0.9	-	=1	0.9	≥0.9	0.87	=1
Pass rate	Female	97.4**	-	≥85	97.4	≥97.4	60.59	≥85
	Male	97.2	-	≥85	97.2	≥97.2	61.12	≥85
	Overall	97.73	-	≥8	97.73	≥97.3	60.87	≥85
Retention rate	Female	=85	85.2	=85	97.4	≥97.4	99.55	=100
	Male	=85	87.04	=85	97.2	≥97.2	99.57	=100
	Overall	=85	86.12	=85	97.3	≥97.3	99.56	=100

** This baseline was set in 2019

Sources: SPR 2018 and ACRs 2019 & 2020

55. **Stakeholders:** As described in the agreement between WFP and USDA, the main national stakeholders are the four key government ministries associated with the relevant sectors of the McGovern-Dole project: education, health, agriculture and social affairs.⁷⁹ Sub-recipient implementing partners are UNICEF, ACTED⁸⁰ and UNESCO. USDA, as the project's donor, also has an interest in the project to ensure that monies are spent appropriately, and the project outcomes and objectives are achieved. Their respective roles as per the initial agreement between WFP and USDA can be found in Annex 3.
56. **Results Frameworks:** The FAS has developed two results frameworks (RF) that depict the Theory of Change (ToC) of how the two SOs can be achieved.
57. **RF1: Literacy Results Framework:** SO1 of the McGovern-Dole project is the Improved Literacy of School-Age Children. Achievement of this SO is dependent upon the achievement of three "result streams" related to Improved Pupil Attendance, Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction, and Improved Attentiveness. Activities 2, 4, 5 and 6 are directly linked to the achievement of SO1 (Annex 6).
58. **RF2: Health and Dietary Practices Results Framework:** SO2 is the Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices by school-age children and by those who influence school-age children's health and well-being, such as parents, families, and school staff. The achievement of SO2 is intended to support

⁷⁸ See footnote 74 for explanation of ACR and SPR. The follow up value indicates the actuals that are measured for that year after baseline i.e. follow-up 1 = first time measured after baseline.

⁷⁹ Ministry of Education (ministère de l'Enseignement primaire, secondaire et de l'Alphabétisation - MEPPSA), the Ministry of Health (ministère de la Santé et de la Population - MSP), Ministry of Agriculture (ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'Élevage et de la Pêche - MAEP) and the Ministry of Social Affairs (ministère des Affaires sociales et de l'Action humanitaire - MASA).

⁸⁰ A French non-governmental organisation that works in international solidarity.

the intermediary result of Reduced Health-Related Absences in RF1. RF2 is therefore complementary to RF1. Activities 7 and 8 concerning nutrition and dietary practices are directly linked to RF2 (see Annex 7).

59. To increase the likelihood of achieving the SOs and sustaining results once the project ends, a set of standardised foundational results common to both RFs has been identified by USDA. Those foundational results are a) increased capacity of government institutions, b) improved policy and regulatory framework, c) increased government support, and d) improved engagement of local organisations and community groups. The foundational results can be found in Annex 8. Activities 1 and 3 are linked to the foundational results.
60. The critical assumptions on which the overall success of the project is based were defined by WFP at the start in 2017 as listed in Annex 9. These include continued economic and political stability, the availability of resources, government commitment to education, and availability of technical expertise to support project implementation.

1.4. EVALUATION QUESTIONS

61. The evaluation has used the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability as the basis for determining and reporting the evaluation findings. Under each criterion, the MTE addressed the evaluation questions to assess the performance of the project and the impact on targeted individuals and institutions (see Table 9 below). To systematically answer all evaluation questions, the ET developed an evaluation matrix which includes the questions to be answered, how the judgement will be formed, expected information sources, opportunities for triangulation and the data collection methods (see Annex 10).

Table 9: Evaluation questions by OECD-DAC criteria

OECD-DAC criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance	Is the project's strategy relevant to the needs of beneficiaries, including girls, boys, men, women and other groups such as indigenous peoples?
	Is the project aligned with the national government's policies and strategies for education and school meals?
	Do the design and implementation of the project complement other donor- and government-funded initiatives?
	Is the project designed to reach the right people with the right type of assistance?
Effectiveness	What is the progress of the project implementation—is the project on track to carry out all activities as planned?
	To what degree has the project resulted (or not) in the expected results (outputs and outcomes) for girls, boys, men and women?
	To what extent have USDA's activities improved student attendance, attention, the quality of literacy instruction and contributed to improved literacy among school-age children?
	How effective has the project been at reducing health-related absence?
	How effective has the project been at improving knowledge of health, sanitation and hygiene practices?
	How effective has the project been at increasing knowledge of safe food preparation and storage?
	How effective has the project been at increasing nutrition knowledge?
	What internal and external factors affect the project's achievement of intended results?
	Are any changes required to increase the project effectiveness?
Efficiency	How efficient is the targeting?

OECD-DAC criteria	Evaluation questions
	Did assistance reach the right beneficiaries (girls, boys, men and women) in the right quantity, quality and at the right time?
	Is the project efficient in terms of costs and costs per beneficiary?
Impact	To what degree has the program outcomes made progress toward positive long-term effects on targeted beneficiaries (girls, boys, men and women), households, communities and institutions?
	Have there been any unintended outcomes (positive, negative)?
	What internal and external factors affected the project's results from leading to intended impact on targeted beneficiaries?
Sustainability	Is the project sustainable/is there strategy for sustainability, sound policy alignment; stable funding/budgeting; quality project design; institutional arrangements; local production & sourcing; partnerships & coordination; community participation & ownership?
	What progress has the government made toward developing a nationally owned school meals project?
	How are local communities involved in and contributing toward school meals?
	What needs to be done within the remaining period in order to transition to a nationally owned school meals project?
General	What are lessons noted from the project up to this point?
	Are there any recommendations for mid-course corrections to improve the project's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and/or sustainability?
	How relevant was WFP's adaptation of the project to respond to COVID-19? ⁸¹

1.5 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

62. **Evaluation Design:** The MTE is the second part of a multi-year activity evaluation that includes baseline, mid-term and endline evaluation exercises. The three inter-connected exercises use the McGovern-Dole RFs and performance indicators as the basic pillars for performance measurement. A baseline was conducted in 2018⁸² by the same evaluation team to systematically establish benchmarks against which to measure progress and long-term effects of the project from its start in 2018 through to the end of the project in 2022.
63. The analytical framework of the overall evaluation depicts the logic of analysis throughout the evaluation plan to ultimately measure, analyse and understand the performance of the McGovern-Dole project.
64. **Data Collection Methods:** To address the MTE evaluation questions, and triangulate findings, the evaluation used the following methods; a) desk review, collection of quantitative data in schools using the same data collection tools as the baseline, b) an assessment of reading capacity of school children (PASEC),⁸³ c) observation in field and d) qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews. All methods are linked to the evaluation matrix. Using different methods and tools to collect data on the same questions from multiple sources allowed triangulation of information so that conclusions do not reflect the view of a single informant or group of informants. The evaluation team's schedule can be found in Annex 11.
65. **Desk Review:** Through the review of past activities, national policies and other documentation related to school feeding, the ET got a global understanding of the context of school feeding in Congo.

⁸¹ This question will be answered keeping in mind that the evaluation team members have only basic knowledge and understanding of the COVID-19.

⁸² Pinault, I. et al (2018) Baseline Report of the WFP McGovern Dole Funded School Feeding Project in the Republic of Congo 2018 – 2022. October 2018

⁸³ Project for the Analysis of Education Systems (Project d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN - PASEC) <http://www.pasec.confemen.org/>

This included a review of the semi-annual performance reports (SAPR) that WFP sends to USDA in which WFP mentions all activities related to the McGovern-Dole project. The ET reviewed all the semi-annual performance reports.⁸⁴ The findings are summarised in Annex 12. Document review also helped triangulate evaluation findings (see Annex 28).

66. **Qualitative tools:** Qualitative assessments examined the coherence of all project activities implemented by WFP Congo and its partners under the McGovern-Dole agreement. They elicited stakeholder perceptions of the project with a focus on relevance, effectiveness and efficiency. As the international team members were not able to travel to Congo due to COVID-19-related travel restrictions, interviews with implementing partners at national level were conducted remotely through video conference. The national team members conducted a two-week field visit to meet school directors, schoolteachers, cooks, school feeding committees, pupils, implementing partners, and staff at WFP sub-offices and relevant institutions. A total of 55 interviews were carried out (21 remotely and 34 in the field) and 23 focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted (see Annex 14 for a list of interviewees, Annex 15 for interview guides). To ensure consistency of qualitative data collection between members of the ET, interview guidelines were elaborated (Annex 15).
67. **Direct observation;** Through field visits, the ET had direct access to the schools benefiting from the project and to the people involved in the implementation and monitoring of the project activities. Direct observation has enabled the ET to triangulate both quantitative and qualitative findings.
68. **Quantitative approach:** The quantitative component of the evaluation applies a quasi-experimental prospective approach which includes a case and a comparison group of schools so that, at endline, the overall impact of the intervention on child literacy (SO1) will be measured using difference in differences tests at endline. Data collection methods for measuring program impact are described in paragraphs 65-72 below.
69. **Quantitative tools:** The tools for collecting the quantitative data consisted of four surveys (teachers, administrative personnel, school feeding committees and pupils) and a literacy test for grade two pupils. The four surveys were sub-contracted to the Institut National de la Statistique (INS). The full report of the INS data collection can be found in Annex 13.
70. The literacy test was conducted by the PASEC team under the leadership of the Director of Primary Education (DEP) within the Ministry of Pre-Primary, Primary, Secondary and Literacy Education, Youth and Civil Education (MEPPSA).
71. **Sampling methods:** The population of interest for the evaluation is the approximately 54,000⁸⁵ children attending primary rural schools where the project has been implemented since 2018. These rural schools have all received WFP's support (or discontinuing support according to budget availability) over the last ten years and are in seven different departments, namely Pool, Plateaux, Cuvette, Bouenza, Lekoumou, Likouala and Sangha.
72. **McGovern-Dole supported (non-ORA) schools (CaseG1): 50,209 children.** The evaluation considers children attending the targeted schools in the first five departments (Pool, Plateaux, Cuvette, Bouenza, Lekoumou) as the main case population group of the evaluation to be compared to the comparison group.
73. **McGovern-Dole supported ORA schools (CaseG2): 3,791 children.** In the other two departments, Likouala and Sangha, schools are adapted to the local cultural background of the indigenous population and are known as Observe, React and Act (ORA) schools. ORA schools give the opportunity to indigenous children to follow a three-year school project that eventually enables them to integrate into the mainstream public system at the beginning of the third year of primary school. Children attending the targeted ORA schools are studied as a second case population group and analysed

84 SAPRs from October 2018 to March 2019, from April to September 2019, from October 2019 to March 2020, and from April to September 2020. The SAPR going from October 2020 to March 2021 was not available at the time of the report writing.

85 Originally, the ET considered the total amount of pupils being assisted to be 54,000 according to the figures given by the MoE. After discussion with the CO during draft revision, the ET revised this number in order to reflect the agreement signed between the FAS and WFP. However, the figure used for the survey is 54,000 pupils.

separately. This allows the isolation of McGovern-Dole project effects, preventing them from being confounded with important and unique cultural factors in Likouala and Sangha departments.

74. Note that the number of McGovern-Dole supported ORA schools in the project (and sample) is small compared to the number of non-ORA schools. Findings from the ORA schools may not therefore be representative of all ORA schools.
75. **Non-supported schools (CompG1):** A comparison group of approximately 700 children has been selected from non-supported schools. The main comparison group in the quasi-experimental design are children attending public rural primary schools that have never received any WFP support or any other school feeding project from another NGO/government/UN agency. They are in the McGovern-Dole targeted departments (Pool, Plateaux, Cuvette, Bouenza and Lekoumou). None of these schools are implementing the McGovern-Dole project as of 2018 and will not be implementing it in the years that follow.
76. **Quantitative survey sampling approach.** Data collection for the MTE took place during the last two weeks of the SY 2020/21 and replicated the design approach and samples used during the 2018 baseline. Data was collected from a total of 107 schools (51 CaseG1, 12 CaseG2 and 44 CompG1) from 7 departments compared with a baseline sample from 110 schools (48 CaseG1, 12 CaseG2 and 49 CompG1) from 7 departments (Table 10). The total number of students assessed in McGovern-Dole supported schools at MTE is 1,349 (from CaseG1 is 1,116 and 233 from CaseG2). The schools for the non-supported schools (comparison group) were selected in the same geographical location as the MGD supported schools (cases) and thus in the same contextual environment (rural area).

Table 10: Quantitative survey sample (baseline and midline)

	McGovern-Dole Supported schools (cases)		Non-supported schools (comparison)		Total	
	#Schools	#Students	#Schools	#Students	#Schools	#Students
Midline 2021						
Quasi-experimental design sample in 5 depts (non-ORA)	51	983	44	822	95	1805
Additional sample in 2 depts (ORA)	12	233	-	-	12	233
TOTAL	63	1216	44	822	107	2038
Baseline 2018						
Quasi-experimental design sample in 5 depts (non-ORA)	50	791	50	799	100	1590
Additional sample in 2 depts (ORA).	14	219			14	219
TOTAL	64	1010	50	779	114	1809

77. At MTE, some changes had to be made to the original baseline sample at two stages. First, an accessibility assessment was conducted in collaboration with the WFP CO before the midline survey launch. Nine out of 114 schools had to be replaced by other randomly selected ones in the departments of Bouenza (1) and Pool (8) due to access issues caused by flood or conflict. Second, during data collection, a) one former comparison school had become a CaseG1 school (reason why CaseG1 = 51 cases) ; b) five comparison school did not find replacement schools; c) two ORA schools had been closed and no replacement schools were accessible in the area.

78. Internal consistency and reliability of the pupils' survey (informing impact indicators) has been tested and found acceptable.⁸⁶ Validity was preserved by conducting the pre-test in a different school outside the sample to not influence or pre-condition actual survey responses.
79. **Gender:** Gender guidance from the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)⁸⁷ has been used to shape the evaluation approach as the ET used it to ensure that gender aspects of the project were assessed during all stages of the evaluation and that appropriate ethics procedures were used. The evaluation design aims for balanced participation of males and females as much as possible in all groups of stakeholders and puts emphasis on gathering data on women's and girl's roles and responsibilities, opportunities and obstacles concerning education. Throughout the evaluation, gender disaggregated data was used where available, and the team analysed gender differences and assessed the extent to which the different needs, priorities, voices and vulnerabilities of women, men, boys and girls had been considered in the design, selection, implementation and monitoring of the project.
80. To ensure participation of women, whenever needed and when possible, women and men were interviewed separately. During the data collection process, the ET emphasized gathering women's views, providing an adapted environment to promote free discussion and considering local practices and cultural habits. The ET also ensured that confidentiality was well understood by all interviewees. As much as possible, girls have been interviewed by female enumerators and boys by male enumerators.
81. At baseline, the ET carried out a gender review during the field mission using an expanded consultation of secondary sources and conducting key informant interviews (KII) with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Gender, teachers, non-governmental organizations (NGO) staff encountered and UN staff. This enabled relevant gender indicators to be established and recommended that indicators be tracked throughout project implementation to capture contributions of the McGovern-Dole project to gender equality and the empowerment of women (GEEW), including protection and mitigation/reduction of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the school environment.
82. **Data Analysis Methods:** Quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS, R and Excel software as appropriate. After receiving the raw data from INS, the data was cleaned and recoded for analysis. Descriptive statistics were performed for case-comparisons groups as per baseline, as well as for baseline-mid-line comparisons. The ET used, wherever appropriate, difference-in-means tests using the independent t-test to compare the means. At endline, the ET plan to use a difference-in-difference (DID)⁸⁸ approach using regression technique to examine the effect of treatment on several outcomes using baseline-endline combined data.

1.6 LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

83. **Ethics:** UNEG Guidance⁸⁹ was used to design ethical protocols at baseline, and the same have been implemented during MTE data collection. Standards ensured that participation was voluntary and informed all participants of the implications of participating in the research. Analysis of responses was treated anonymously so that findings could not be attributed to specific respondents. The enumerators and ET obtained consent from all respondents, ensured cultural sensitivity, respected the autonomy of participants, ensured fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensured that the evaluation resulted in no harm to participants or their communities.

⁸⁶ The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was used on theoretically correlated question and found to be above 0.7 (for example question "Do you usually eat something before coming to school?" and dietary diversity score before school calculated from question "What did you eat this morning before school?" present a standard Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.78)

⁸⁷ UNEG; Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations. Guidance document. August 2014.

⁸⁸ $Est(Y) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * POST + \beta_2 * TR + \beta_3 * POST * TR + \epsilon$

⁸⁹ Two key UNEG guidance documents have been used: Norms and Standards for Evaluation. 2016; and the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, June 2020.

84. **Evaluation Limitations:** Variations in data collection processes for PMP indicators and reporting during the project cycle created challenges for providing a summative analysis. PMP indicators would benefit from clarification on data collection methods and consistency in reporting methodology. To assess project achievements, the ET based analysis on the final version of the ITT provided by the CO as well as the SAPRs produced by the WFP CO and submitted to USDA. However, the ET identified areas of inconsistency which made it difficult to understand the achievements reached throughout the project.
85. Other limitations were noted that are specific for the MTE:
- Although the ET/INS tried to contact the same schools as baseline, some schools could not be reached. This meant that some schools had to be replaced with new schools within the same category of CaseG1, CompG1 and CaseG2. The list of replacement schools is provided in Annex 16.
 - Because this is an MTE, ET simply provided comparative descriptive statistics of both baseline and MTE without assessing the significance of differences using statistical tests. Furthermore, no difference-in-differences analysis was conducted to calculate the treatment effect of project participation. More detailed statistical analysis will be done at endline.
 - As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the international team members could not travel and did all possible interviews remotely. A second national consultant was recruited to work aside the initial national consultant.
 - The pandemic resulted in delays in the implementation of some project activities. As a result, effectiveness of some activities, notably the capacity strengthening component, could not be fully assessed.

5. Evaluation findings

87. The findings are based on the data collected during the MTE report, both qualitative and quantitative data. The findings are presented in three sections: whether the baseline recommendations have been followed; findings by evaluation criteria; a review of the PMP indicators, comparing change from baseline figures to report on the project's performance indicators.

2.1 FOLLOW UP OF 2018 BASELINE RECOMMENDATIONS

88. In 2018, the same ET conducted a project baseline with the objective of providing recommendations for an appropriate roll out of the project. As per the ToR of this MTE, the ET has assessed how well those recommendations were integrated into the implementation of the project.

Baseline recommendation 1: The ET recommends that WFP, the sub-recipient partners and other main stakeholders in the education and school feeding sector (such as the Directorate of School Feeding, the World Bank and the Association des pères spiritains du Congo-ASPC) enhance coordination before the start of the McGovern-Dole project in September/ October 2018 in order to respond to the weaknesses in the planning of the project as identified in this baseline report. These refer mainly to insufficient common understanding of project outcomes between WFP and cooperating partners, lack of appropriate activities planned to reach the "Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction" Result Stream, insufficient details and disaggregation of the implementation plan, and non-alignment between sub-recipient partners' MoUs and the initial WFP/USDA agreement.

89. This recommendation has not been appropriately actioned. The agreement between the FAS and WFP under the McGovern-Dole project includes an action plan where all project objectives and implementation modalities are described. As part of its support to improved literacy, WFP is expected to "develop a new curriculum focused on literacy, numeracy, health and hygiene, nutrition, school gardens, sustainable development, environment, and climate change. WFP will also distribute new textbooks reflecting the revised national curriculum to schoolchildren and provide training to teachers on the revised curriculum". To fulfil these requirements, WFP established partnerships with several organisations, notably with UNESCO and UNICEF to focus on education.
90. According to the key informants met during the data collection phase, both at the institutional level and with implementing partners, the implementation of their diverse activities was not coordinated in compliance with the cause-and-effect relationship that underlies the two McGovern-Dole RFs. The development/revision of a national curriculum focused on literacy and numeracy, the distribution of new textbooks reflecting the revised national curriculum to schoolchildren and the provision of training to teachers on the revised curriculum - all activities clearly stipulated in the FAS/WFP agreement - have not been contracted to any WFP partner despite being central to achieving the strategic objective of the project. Field visits in schools and focus group discussion with the teaching body further confirm that activities related to literacy have been almost inexistent.
91. WFP's successive agreements with UNICEF and UNESCO to implement activities to support improved literacy have not been appropriately focused on the specific objectives of the McGovern-Dole project. Agreements with UNICEF on activities to improve student enrolment, promote improved health, promote improved nutrition, and improve potable water in schools have been more successful (in year two only). More information about UNESCO and UNICEF's work in supporting literacy can be found ahead.⁹⁰
92. According to certain interviews with external and internal stakeholders, the evaluation team realised that the specificity of the McGovern-Dole project is not always well understood. Interviewees do always realise that a McGovern-Dole project has objectives that go beyond the objective of only tackling pupil-feeding.

⁹⁰ This information is distributed across various sections. It is notably discussed in 2.2 Relevance (UNESCO para 106, 107; UNICEF para 108); 2.3 Effectiveness (UNESCO para 115, 116, 117; UNICEF para 118, 119); 3.1 Conclusions (para 240)

Baseline recommendation 2. Following the baseline findings, several indicators need to be modified either through further disaggregation or through re-definition to better match the activity they intend to measure. Moreover, new indicators should be incorporated to ensure that adequate information is tracked to properly measure planned activities. Yearly targets need better definition and as much as possible they should be articulated throughout the project's duration. Those indicators should be directly linked to activities as per agreed MoUs with WFP.

93. This recommendation has been partially actioned. After the baseline, the CO revised the ITT to integrate the evaluation findings that had defined or redefined certain baseline figures and annual targets, and that had provided insight on the use and relevance of certain indicators. However, it seems to the ET that the CO has not properly integrated the PMP as the fundamental monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool of the McGovern-Dole project. This finding stands on various observations:
- The final version of the PMP that was given to the ET by the CO dates from October 22, 2019. It includes nine comments that have not been addressed.
 - The baseline figure and targets used in the SAPR ITT sent to USDA do not match the revised PMP from October 2019. It seems that the indicator figures used in the SAPR are the same as before the PMP revision in October 2019.
 - The semi-annual ITTs do not provide disaggregated gender figures.
 - The semi-annual ITT for the period running from October 2019 to March 2020 has received six comments /questions from USDA based on missing reporting data.
 - Ten indicators that are present in the revised PMP (October 2019), mainly outcome indicators, do not appear in the SAPR.
 - Indicators are not specific enough to be able to easily understand what they refer to (Standard ind. # 4, 6, 7 and 18 and Custom ind. # 1, 2, 3 and 6).

Baseline recommendation 3. Observing that the fundamental activities linked to the Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction will not be conducted by McGovern-Dole sub-recipients but rather fall under the PRAASED World Bank project, the ET recommends that McGovern-Dole works in tight collaboration with PRAASED by elaborating a common framework in order to enhance project complementarities, avoid overlap and allow McGovern-Dole's monitoring system to establish the necessary connections with PRAASED for an effective monitoring of the McGovern-Dole project. This is particularly important regarding the "Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction" result stream.

94. Aside from a meeting at the start of the McGovern-Dole project, this recommendation has not been actioned. There has been no cooperation between the World Bank and WFP related to the implementation of the McGovern-Dole project. More details on this can be found ahead in Section 3.2.

Baseline recommendation 4. WFP and its sub-recipient partners should apply the Congolese Food Based Dietary Guidelines to overcome the inconsistencies found across various documents on the use of food groups, allowing for a unified understanding and measurement of activities and indicators linked to nutrition. In addition, the key messages on the improved use of health and dietary practices that will be used in schools, health centres and agricultural extension should be harmonised among all implementing partners.

95. This recommendation has not been actioned. There has been no initiative to create a unified understanding concerning the concept of adequacy of dietary intake or measuring dietary diversity see Annex 17. Importantly, measuring dietary diversity is not a requirement of the McGovern-Dole project. However, WFP and partners would benefit from inclusion of an indicator measuring changes in dietary diversity to better monitor expected effects i.e., change in health and dietary practices.
96. During the implementation of McGovern-Dole project to date, there has been no engagement from WFP in coordinating nutrition education activities amongst the various partners. After the baseline

recommendation, it would have been considered adequate if WFP had taken the lead in initiating and coordinating such a process.

97. UNESCO and the Institut national de recherche et d'actions pédagogiques (INRAP), in consultation with numerous stakeholders, developed the “Module sur l'éducation à la sécurité alimentaire, nutritionnelle et la mise en œuvre des classes vertes” for teachers. Amongst the stakeholders was a nutritionist from the Ministry of Health and a nutrition professor. WFP, UNICEF and WHO were not involved. The food groups proposed by the Ministry of Health and UNESCO/INRAP do not appear in the curriculum and the four food groups proposed do not constitute an adequately diverse diet (see Annex 17 that was elaborated by the evaluation team during the baseline in 2018).
98. UNICEF has used the UNESCO-developed curriculum for the training of teachers. This is surprising as UNICEF usually bases conceptualization of dietary diversity using the internationally agreed 7-8 food groups for small children. The Activity Plan also spelled out that WFP and UNICEF would lead the process of developing teaching material for SO2, but this has not happened.

Baseline recommendation 5. WFP's M&E system needs to increase its capacity through the recruitment of staff and more detailed tracking of activities in order to be able to monitor McGovern-Dole project implementation performance. According to the baseline findings, monitoring the McGovern-Dole project should include:

- close and detailed cooperation between all involved partners, including a coordinated and aligned M&E system;
- an individual follow-up of each McGovern-Dole-assisted school which will allow reporting on specific needs rather than relying on broad indicator values as collected by the INS survey.

99. This recommendation has been partially actioned. WFP did recruit more staff. An international M&E staff was recruited for this purpose from early 2018 until mid-June 2019, at the beginning of the project, and a second consultant has been in place since March 2020. A second international professional staff was also recruited in 2018, as well as a Global Partnership Officer, bringing the M&E unit to three international staff in addition to the two national ones already in place. Throughout the country, WFP has six M&E field officers divided between the four sub-offices (Nkayi, Kindamba, Owando, and Bétou) and the office in Brazzaville.
100. WFP also actioned baseline recommendations to ensure individual follow-up of assisted schools. The CO now compiles specific school feeding data for each McGovern-Dole-assisted school in a dashboard. This dashboard has been designed by the country office to follow WFP school feeding activities and have a real time overview of the situation. This dashboard is also designed to be able to have specific information on every single school under the project. Created in 2018, this tool has been evolving ever since and is now at its fourth version. It is the first school feeding dashboard used in the region. However, the data collected for the dashboard could be improved to better identify specific needs. The relevance and effectiveness of the dashboard is discussed in the effectiveness section. Explanation on data provided in the dashboard is given in Annex 18.
101. However, WFP did not take sufficient action to ensure partner capacity to monitor and evaluate all project indicators. According to the various interviews held by the ET, the recommendation to have close and detailed cooperation between all involved partners, including a coordinated and aligned M&E system, has not been realized. Interviewees reported that, though they coordinated to produce SAPRs sent to USDA, there is no common approach and understanding of how to monitor the PMP indicators.

Baseline recommendation 6. To meet Gender Policy commitments, the WFP CO should develop specific indicators that monitor the extent to which the project promotes participation of women in School Feeding Committees (SFCs) in decision-making positions and others to prevent unforeseen protection issues. Attention should be given on how McGovern-Dole activities can promote women's empowerment, and how to promote gender equality in schools.

102. This recommendation has been actioned to some extent. The PMP now includes an indicator to measure the extent to which the project promotes participation of women in SFCs (custom indicator nine). In July 2019, the CO received a mission from WFP's Regional Bureau in Johannesburg (RBJ) and from Headquarters to train CO and partner personnel, work with the M&E and communication teams, and advise on strengthening the gender transformational dimensions of the CSP implementation. This mission was to improve gender integration into the country office's activities and strengthen the knowledge and skills of its staff and partners on gender concepts and issues. More information on the consideration of these gender issues within the project can be found ahead.⁹¹

Evaluation questions

103. The following sub-sections answers the evaluation questions under each of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria stated earlier in Table 9 and highlighting the results of activities as per the agreement between WFP and USDA. Certain findings are based on the quantitative data collected by the INS in schools. All data collected through the questionnaires can be found in Annexes 19 to 22. Some data is directly presented in the report through graphs or tables, whilst other data is only referred to in the relevant annexes. To help the reader link the evaluation question to the findings, a concordance table between evaluation questions and paragraph numbers has been added in Annex 23.

2.2. RELEVANCE

104. The evaluation found that the design of the project is relevant to the Congolese context. As presented in the context section, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and literacy are of main concerns throughout the country. The selection of schools has been in collaboration with the ministry of education trying to reach the schools most in need in rural areas.
105. Congo has low levels of literacy and numeracy, so the primary literacy objective of the McGovern-Dole is relevant. However, the agreements with sub-contracted partners have focused on populations outside of the McGovern-Dole literacy target group. In the agreement between WFP and UNESCO from November 2017-December 2018,⁹² UNESCO worked closely with INRAP (within MEPPSA) "in the development of food security education modules for teachers and young people with particular attention to literacy⁹³ and education for adults, mothers and single mothers"⁹⁴. These modules do not target school-age children. It therefore would not be considered relevant as either improved literacy instructional materials (MGD 1.1.3) or for improving the quality of literacy instruction (MGD 1.1) as understood under a McGovern-Dole project.
106. Further, the introduction stipulates that the modules "will have the merit of helping to increase agricultural production, reduce food insecurity and, consequently, ensure a good nutritional status for the population through a healthy and balanced diet."⁹⁵ While this means that the module might be relevant for the achievement of the SO2 (Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices) it is not as relevant for improving literacy of school-age children.
107. UNICEF's role in supporting literacy was to conduct training of school administrators in the departments targeted by the McGovern-Dole project. However, the agreement between FAS and WFP stipulates that the training is intended "to equip participants with key management tools to improve

⁹¹ It is notably discussed in paragraphs 2.2 Effectiveness (para. 182-189)

⁹² WFP and UNESCO contribution agreement, 1 November 2017-31 December 2018.

⁹³ The term "literacy" is ambiguous depending on whether you are in an anglophone or francophone environment. In French "literacy" is specifically understood as "alphabétisation" and corresponds to the teaching of reading and writing to adults in the context of non-formal education, notably in literacy centers. In French, there is no mention of "alphabétisation" in formal primary education. In primary school we talk about learning to read and write. In the French-speaking Congo, this is reflected through the title of the Ministry of Education: Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire et Secondaire, et de l'Alphabétisation (Ministry of Primary and Secondary School, and Literacy).

⁹⁴ Termes de référence relatifs à l'élaboration des modules de formation portant sur l'éducation à la nutrition et à la sécurité alimentaire, Bureau de l'UNESCO, Brazzaville, République du Congo.

⁹⁵ Module sur l'éducation à la sécurité alimentaire, nutritionnelle et mise en œuvre des classes vertes pour l'enseignant et l'animateur d'alphabétisation, INRAP, 2019.

the day-to-day school operations and strengthen the school administrators' ability to run effective schools that attract qualified teachers." Although better school administration and management may improve school meal management, this activity is included in the RF under support to literacy (MGD 1.1.5) and it is unlikely to have any direct effect on improving literacy.

108. Similarly, the nutrition and health needs in Congo are high, so school feeding and other nutrition and health components of the McGovern-Dole project are highly relevant. The project feeds children from poor households for whom the school meal is sometimes the only meal they receive throughout the day. Data collected from the baseline and midterm evaluation surveys on the number of meals eaten before and after school supports this. School feeding therefore mainly serves a food security purpose, acting as a social safety net for poor households. WFP has appropriately engaged with the Ministry of Education to target the project in the poorest and most remote areas of the country. The model of using imported food does run counter to the government's preference for a home-grown school feeding model that uses locally produced food. As stated in the National School Feeding Policy,⁹⁶ the government's vision is to link school feeding to agriculture and local economy.
109. Throughout the last three years of the McGovern-Dole project, WFP has made efforts to build institutional capacity for school feeding at the level of the Directorate of School Feeding (DSF – Direction de l'alimentation scolaire) both at the national and regional levels. Those activities are relevant for strengthening the ownership of school feeding activities by the government. Capacity development of the DSF is discussed further under the effectiveness and sustainability criteria. At the individual and community levels, capacity building regarding school feeding management was also relevant.
110. Whilst a close collaboration with the MEPSA and the NSFP has remained relevant throughout the project, other initially anticipated institutional partners, as mentioned in the agreement between USDA and WFP, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Affairs have not really been implemented. Those ministries have not been directly involved in the implementation, and no WFP / McGovern-Dole focal point was identified in these ministries during data collection phase.

2.3. EFFECTIVENESS

111. The effectiveness of the project is assessed against the main project SOs as defined by the USDA RFs and the activities defined in the MoU between WFP and the FAS. A summary of activity progress based on the CO indicator tracking table can be found in Annex 12.
112. **SO1 Improve literacy of school-aged children:** The main strategic objective (SO1) of any McGovern-Dole project is to improve the literacy of school age children. More specifically, the project should improve the literacy of children so that by the end of two grades of primary schooling they are able to read and understand appropriate grade level text. As per RF1, this upper-level project comes through three results streams; a) improving the quality of literacy Instruction (MGD 1.1.), b) attentiveness (MGD 1.2.) and student attendance (MGD 1.3.). Activities to reach these outcomes have been detailed in the agreement between FAS and WFP.
113. **MGD 1.1. Improved quality of literacy instruction / Activity 6. Support improved literacy:** The development of the guidelines by UNESCO, intended to be on improving literacy, instead focused on food security and nutrition and targeted adults, mothers and single mothers, rather than school-aged children. UNICEF training targeting school administrators focused on school and school canteen management.
114. Using these modules, UNESCO provided a training of trainer (ToT) in pedagogy and life skills on nutrition education to 160 selected teachers from McGovern-Dole funded schools. The trained staff were then supposed to cascade the training to teachers in all twelve departments in Congo, including departments outside the McGovern-Dole target departments. However, due to lack of resources, the cascade training was not organized.

96 Politique nationale d'alimentation scolaire, January 2016

115. The agreement between WFP and UNESCO was established for only one year, with no replacement agreement between the two organizations since December 2018. There were therefore no further opportunities for providing training as intended.
116. UNICEF's training for school administrators specifically targeted the five departments targeted by the McGovern-Dole project. UNICEF conducted the training for 584 school administrators: 160 in 2017/18; 214 in 2018/19 in Lekoumou and Plateaux; 110 in 2019/2020 in Plateaux and Cuvette; 100 in 2021 in Pool and Likouala. In total, nearly 557 administrators benefited from the training (95 percent of planned) including school directors, school district inspectors, heads of school districts and heads of school administration in the departmental directorates of primary, secondary, and literacy education.⁹⁷ Teacher training materials were also developed and updated each year before being distributed to trainees.⁹⁸ The lack of teachers training in literacy teaching related topics was even highlighted in the PASEC report: "The holding of teaching classes by volunteers who have neither initial training nor continuing training and with uncertain remuneration conditions cannot allow as many pupils as possible to reach the "sufficient" level of skills. We have to think about the pedagogical training of teachers."
117. UNICEF was also responsible for the distribution of school supplies and materials which contributes directly to MGD 1.1.2. UNICEF distributed school kits to students attending ORA schools in Likouala and Sangha departments, and to students in public primary schools in Bouenza department. School supplies were distributed to more than 54,237 children since the launch of the project, which is less than the 69,642 children planned (77.8 percent).⁹⁹ Each individual school kit comprised a school bag, slate, two notebooks, pencil, eraser, sharpener, chalks, textbook, reading and mathematics manuals. For levels two and three, the kit also included a ruler, blue pen and red pen. However, WFP does not clarify on which teaching and learning materials and in what unit (for example kit versus item) are included in reporting on standard indicator number six. Within this information, especially the literacy related materials, it is not possible to evaluate their potential effectiveness.¹⁰⁰ This will be followed up at endline. The need for literacy-related materials is evidenced by the school director survey, where less than 20% of non-ORA supported schools had any teaching materials (see Annex 19 for further details).
118. The other activities related to improving the quality of literacy curriculum included in the FAS/WFP agreement have not been sub-contracted out by WFP and have not been implemented even though they are central to achieving SO1. These are:
- Development/revision of a national curriculum focused on literacy and numeracy,
 - Distribution of new textbooks reflecting the revised national curriculum to schoolchildren.
 - The provision of training to teachers on the revised curriculum.
 - Leading a ToT with teachers on literacy.

As a result, spending on literacy-related activities is much lower than planned. Table 11 shows the sub-contracted literacy activities and the percentage of budget that the ET considers has supported improvement in literacy.

⁹⁷ Past Performance Review, UNICEF.

⁹⁸ With the support from UNICEF and WFP, in 2018 the MEPSA issued the Syllabus de formation des directeurs d'écoles sur la gestion manageriale d'un établissement scolaire and the Syllabus Renforcement des capacités des encadreurs et enseignants du cycle primaire sur la pratique de la pédagogie curative, volets lecture, orthographe et mathématiques, in 2019.

⁹⁹ Past Performance Review, UNICEF.

¹⁰⁰ The last SAPR indicates that during the period October 2020-March 2021 a total 5,153 textbooks and other teaching and learning materials have been provided.

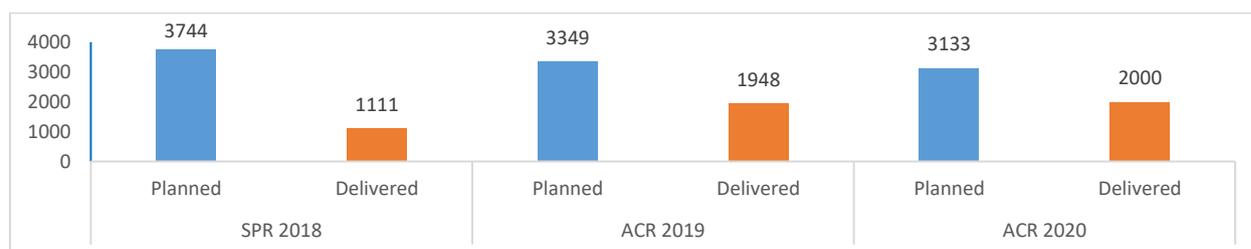
Table 11: Budget allocations to activities to support improved literacy

Period	Partner	Training of school administrators	Purchase and distribution of school kits/school furniture/learning materials	Total budget allocated to partner (USD)	% Support improved literacy
1 Nov 2017 - 31 Dec 2018	UNESCO			141,123.78	0.0%*
1 Oct 2017 - 31 Dec 2018	UNICEF	7,556.79	118,114.80	558,741.66	22.50%
1 Jan 2019 - 31 Dec 2019	UNICEF	30,495.42		530,561.12	5.70%
1 Jan 2020 - 31 Dec 2020	UNICEF	35,000.00		336,676.55	10.40%
1 Jan 2021 - 31 Dec 2021	UNICEF	30,000.00	96,686.35	342,133.27	37.00%

* As mentioned above, although labeled as "support to improved literacy", the activity implemented by UNESCO was targeted to nutrition education.

119. Further, the baseline recommended that WFP coordinate literacy-related activities with the World Bank. The World Bank's project to improve the education system - PRAASED (2016-2023) - has several literacy related components. Coordination had the potential to create useful relationships and programmatic synergies. There is strong alignment between numerous components and subcomponents of the PRAASED and the objectives of the McGovern-Dole project (see Annex 24). However, national funding to the project has not been forthcoming despite the agreement with the IMF being in place since July 2019. Despite this, the ET was informed that the World Bank is still interested in establishing coordination between the two projects, particularly regarding the provision of textbooks and training of teachers in the USDA intervention zone.
120. **MGD 1.2. Improved attentiveness / Activity 4. Distribute food:** Improved attentiveness is included in the McGovern-Dole RF because it is difficult for children to study effectively on an empty stomach, as their attentiveness is likely to decrease. Food distribution is one of the activities contributing to the SO1. The PMP does not include an indicator to measure the tons of food delivered, this is only reported at country level through WFP Annual Country Reports (ACRs).¹⁰¹ As agreed in the baseline report, this value is used to understand food distribution activities, even though the data includes food delivered outside of McGovern Dole funding. According to the ACRs, the CO has not achieved the planned volume of food distribution in any year (Figure 2). The percentage of planned food delivered was 29.7 percent in 2018, 58.2 percent in 2019 and 63.8 percent in 2020.

Figure 2: Food distributed (MT) compared to planned volume (Country Office targets)



121. To date, the country office has distributed 49.5 percent of the planned food volume. Several reasons for this low volume were provided by the CO, including the closure of schools for two months in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on interview findings, the ET considers the primary reason for this shortfall to be a result of poor commodity management. Schools do not always receive their intended allocation of food. This can happen because, if food is left over in schools when it is time for restocking, this volume of food is subtracted from the volume to be delivered. Alternatively, when WFP food delivery is delayed due to logistic difficulties getting food to schools, the food "missed" for delivery during the delay is never replaced, meaning that the concerned school will never get the food it was supposed to get if there had been no delay in delivery.

101 See footnote 74 for explanation of ACRs and SPRs

122. To assess the effectiveness of this activity, it is important to understand the consistent availability of food for pupils throughout both the school day and the school year. Since the school meal in Congo is served during the lunch hour and not as breakfast, it is important to understand whether children have eaten breakfast before going to school. The MTE found that, when compared to baseline, the percentage of children coming to school with an empty stomach had increased from 50.1 percent at baseline to 56.5 percent (see table 8 in Annex 21). The fact that so many children report coming to school hungry may justify shifting the school meal to earlier in the day.
123. Assessing the consistent availability of food throughout the school year is more difficult given WFP's methodology of beneficiary calculation. WFP considers a beneficiary as any child receiving at least one meal. Hence a child who receives a meal for one week over the whole school year is as much a beneficiary as a child who received a meal all year round. A result of X beneficiaries does not mean X beneficiaries that benefited from 180 hot meals during the school year. It could mean anything from X beneficiaries having received one single meal during the whole school year to X beneficiaries have benefited from all 180 meals.
124. Considering this definition of a beneficiary, it is difficult to adequately determine the effectiveness of the project. The ET therefore proposes to measure effectiveness based on the amount of food distributed plus the number of beneficiaries reached to measure the number of pupils benefitting from 180 meals (the duration of the project as specified in the final version of the PMP).¹⁰²
125. Based on the beneficiary numbers provided by WFP, the ET calculates that the project could only deliver the equivalent of 111 school days of food (out of 180) during SY 2018/19 (62 percent of school days), and 157 school days (out of 180) during SY 2019/20 (87 percent of school days). However, Std. Ind #15 is calculated using the average monthly number of children having benefited from school meals multiplied by the number of school days over the reporting period. Hence, it is a theoretical number which may not reflect the reality. For example, it does not consider days where meals may not have been served because the school director is absent (example seen in the field by the ET).

Table 12: School feeding figures according to the SAPR

Sources: WFP SAPRs to USDA

	Oct. 2018 to March 2019	April to Sept 2019	Oct. 2019 to March 2020	April to Sept 2020
St. Ind # 15 (meals distributed)	4,750,000	3,383,994	6,175,000	7,053,954
St. Ind # 16 (pupils benefiting from the project)	73,584		84,058*	
Number of meals theoretically available per pupil	65	46	73	84
Number of school days meals were provided**	111		157	

*Highest number of pupils between both semesters was used here.

**Calculated by the ET

126. Based on the ET calculation, the McGovern-Dole project could have fed only 25,718 pupils in 2018; 45,093 in 2019; and 46,296 in 2020 with a complete ration of one meal per day (Table 13). This is much less than the beneficiary figures provided by WFP (standard indicator # 16). This means that either pupils are not benefitting from the project for the full duration (180 days) and/or the meal portion is smaller than the recommended ration size. This finding is based on the planned ration as per the approved project.

Table 13: Theoretical number of pupils possibly feed with the food distributed (ET calculation)

	2018	2019	2020

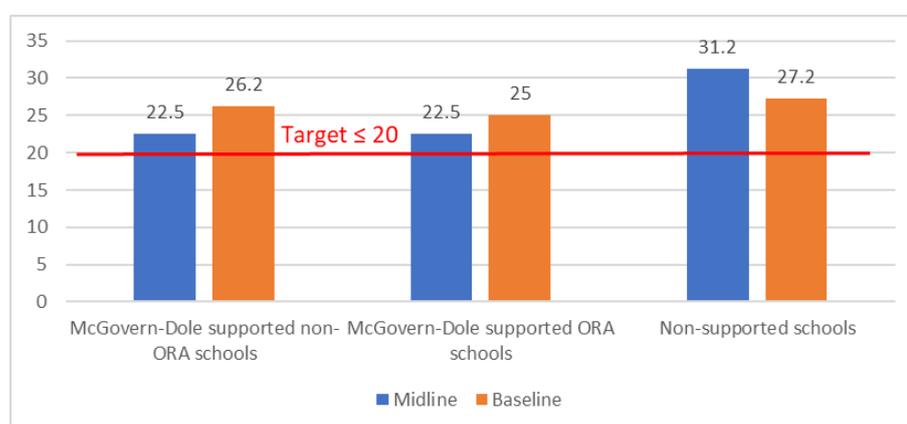
¹⁰² WFP food ration per child per meal: 150g of fortified rice, 40g of legumes, 15g of oil, 30g of sardines and 5g of salt; a total of 240g.

Tonnes distributed (SPR 2018 & ACRs 2019,2020) – as per Table 11	1,111 tons	1,948 tons	2,000 tons
Number of meals available considering 240g/child (ET calculation)	4,629,166 meals	8,116,666 meals	8,333,333 meals
Theoretical number of pupils possibly feed considering 180 days of school (ET calculation)	25,718 pupils	45,093 pupils	46,296 pupils

This table includes the Take Home Ration (THR) provided to learners when schools were closed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

127. **Attentiveness in class:** The MTE assessed whether the food distribution (school feeding) had indeed supported improved attentiveness in class as intended in the RF. Data from the Teacher’s Survey shows there has been a perception that there is an improvement in children’s attention in class, with decreased inattentiveness being reported by teachers in both non-ORA and ORA supported schools (Figure 3). In contrast, perceived inattentiveness in non-supported schools increased from 27.2 to 31.2 percent.¹⁰³ The ET will determine at endline whether the baseline/endline differences are statistically significant.

Figure 3: Proportion of pupils reported to be inattentive (every day or sometimes) in class

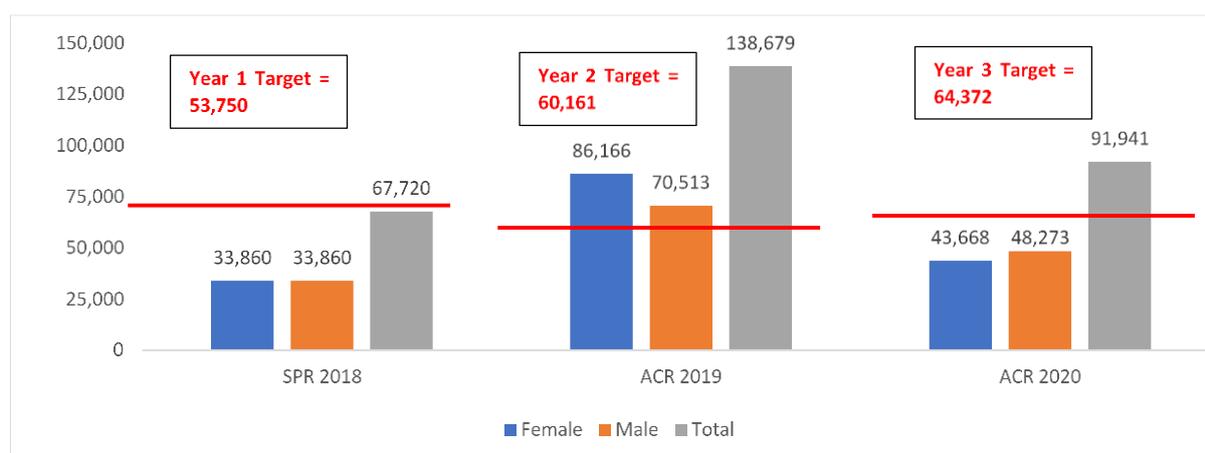


Non-ORA schools: Baseline n=23, Midline n=83; ORA schools: Baseline n=97, Midline n=19; non-supported schools: Baseline n=90, Midline n=84
Source: Evaluation teacher’s survey

128. **MGD 1.2 Improved student attendance / Activity 2. Improve pupil enrolment:** Under the partnership agreements with ACTED and UNICEF, WFP implemented several activities to attract children to school and keep them there. These included raising awareness of the importance of education, carried out through several channels at school, community, and department levels of all targeted schools. The importance of education was included in training modules provided to farmers organizations in Bouenza department (ACTED), in leaflets, and in training to school committees and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members, in awareness raising sessions, and during broadcast radio programs (UNICEF). Details on activities carried out until now are provided in Annex 12.
129. The WFP ACRs show that the number of pupils enrolled (beneficiaries) surpassed the targets planned for the years 2019 and 2020 (respectively an increase of 130.5 percent and 42.8 percent), compared to reaching only 67.3 percent of planned in 2018. Figure 4 also shows the numbers of children disaggregated by gender. In 2018, equal numbers of girls and boys were reached, while in 2019, girls were more represented than boys, and in 2020 there were less girls reached. The ET has no satisfactory explanation for these disparate findings.

¹⁰³ See Annex 20 for full details

Figure 4: School enrolment according to the ACRs (Country Office targets)



Sources: SPR 2018 and ACRs 2019 & 2020

130. WFP COs collect several corporate indicators against which all WFP school feeding projects are monitored: attendance rate, drop-out rate, enrolment rate, gender ratio, pass rate and retention rate. The data from the ACRs on these indicators is provided in Table 13.

Table 14: Attendance rate, drop-out rate, enrolment rate, gender ratio, pass rate and retention rate (Country Office targets)

	SPR 2018		ACR 2019		ACR 2020		End-CSP Target	
	Baseline	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
Attendance rate	Female	98	86.81	=100	93.27	≥93.27	80.09	95
	Male	98	87.23	=100	93.67	≥93.67	79.33	95
	Overall	98	86.62	=100	93.48	≥93.48	79.68	95
Drop-out rate	Female	2	14.8	=0.5	2.6	≤2.6	0.45	≤0.4
	Male	2	12.96	=0.5	2.8	≤2.8	0.43	≤0.4
	Overall	2	13.88	=0.5	2.27	≤2.27	0.44	≤0.4
Enrolment rate	Female	≥6	3.2	≥7	5.77	≥5.77	-12.81	≥10
	Male	≥6	11.7	≥7	5.83	≥5.83	19.81	≥10
	Overall	≥6	7	≥7	5.8	≥5.8	-6.33	≥10
Gender ratio	Overall	0.9	-	=1*	0.9	≥0.9	0.87	1
Pass rate	Female	97.4**	-	≥85	97.4	≥97.4	60.59	≥85
	Male	97.2	-	≥85	97.2	≥97.2	61.12	≥85
	Overall	97.73	-	≥8	97.73	≥97.3	60.87	≥85
Retention rate	Female	85	85.2	85	97.4	≥97.4	99.55	100
	Male	85	87.04	85	97.2	≥97.2	99.57	100
	Overall	85	86.12	85	97.3	≥97.3	99.56	100

** This baseline figure is from 2019

Sources: SPR 2018 and ACRs 2019 & 2020

131. While indicators generally improved from 2018 to 2019, school closures during 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a decrease in enrolment, attendance and pass rates that year.

132. **School feeding during COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most important external factor affecting the project. In March 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic reached Congo, the Government restricted population movement to limit the impacts, including the closure of all schools and the confinement of people at home. These restrictions were in place from March to May 2020 and had an impact on WFP's operations and on the implementation of the McGovern-Dole project.
133. The closure of the schools meant the suspension of school canteens and in-school meals. To help mitigate the effects of the pandemic on the nutritional status of children benefiting from school meals, WFP shifted from the on-site modality to take-home rations (THR), with the agreement of the USDA McGovern-Dole project. According to the ACR 2020, 57,031 pupils (30,105 boys and 26,926 girls) received the equivalent of three months of dry rations (April, May, June 2020) to take home.¹⁰⁴ Overall, 87 percent of the planned number of beneficiaries received THR (Table below).

Table 15: Take home ration beneficiaries 2020, planned vs. reached (Country Office targets)

	ACR 2020		
	Planned*	Reached	Planned vs. reached
Female	32,625	26,926	73.50%
Male	32,625	30,105	92.30%
Total	65,250	57,031	87.40%

Source: WFP Congo, ACR 2020

134. According to data gathered through the INS survey, take-home rations support was provided to less than half the supported schools (39.2 percent of non-ORA; 42.9 percent of ORA) during the COVID-19 school closures. Of the McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA supported schools that did not provide THR, 40 percent said they did not have food in stock to implement THR. This aligns with the earlier finding that insufficient food stocks were being delivered to schools. The remaining 60 percent of schools that did not provide THR kept their food in stock for use when schools reopened. Similarly, most of the ORA schools that did not distribute THR (75 percent) did not distribute food rations because they did not have any food in stock at the time.

SO1: Improve literacy of school-aged children. Overall, the evaluation found that the activities implemented to support improved literacy of school-aged children have not been implemented effectively.

Activities to promote school enrolment have had a positive effect, with the enrolment of children in McGovern-Dole supported schools increasing up until the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when it decreased. However, besides distribution of school materials to children, the activities that were originally intended to directly support the improvement of literacy of school aged children have not been implemented as per the project agreement between FAS and WFP. As a result, their direct contribution to the achievement of the McGovern-Dole main strategic objective is limited.

With more than half the children coming to school on an empty stomach (~60 percent), the school meal is important to reduce hunger and enable children to concentrate in class. However, according to ACR figures, properly sized meals cannot be being provided every school day, as the volume of food that has been distributed is far less than the planned volumes. The amount of the provided school meal could be a contributing factor to the limited decrease in inattentiveness of students. Additional research would be needed to confirm this hypothesis.

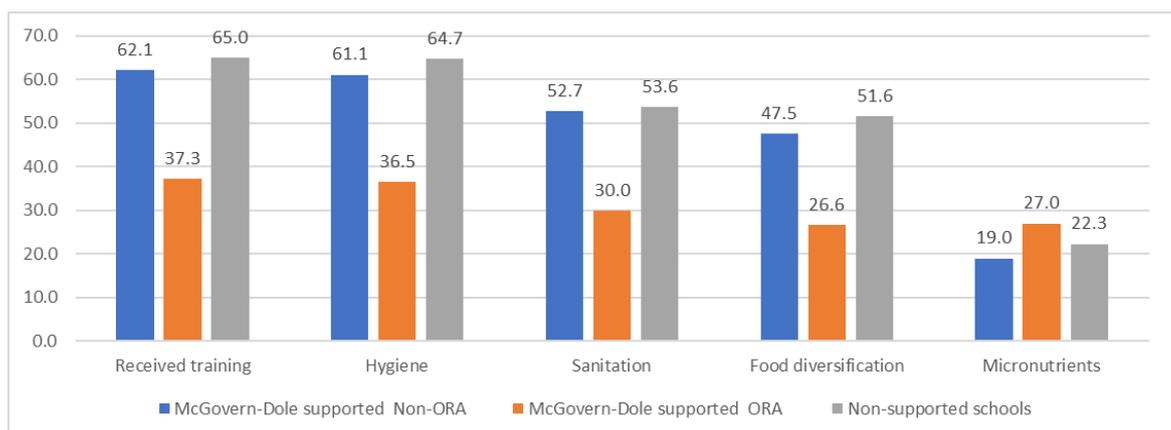
135. **SO2: Increase use of health and dietary practices:** As presented in RF2 (Annex 7) the increased use of health and dietary practices (SO2) directly contributes to the reduction of health-related absence

¹⁰⁴ There was a discrepancy in ACR reporting. Page 11 reports that 75,081 children received the equivalent of three months of dry rations (April, May, June 2020) to take home. However, information later in the ACR the number is reported as 57,031

(MGD 1.3.2) and ultimately to the achievement of SO1. The SO2 is achieved through six different health and nutrition outcomes.

136. **MGD 2.1. Improved knowledge of health and hygiene practices / Activity 5: Promote improved health:** Awareness raising and trainings were planned at the community and school-level to promote improved health and hygiene practices. At the community level, ACTED provided community-based training on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)-related topics. Activity implementation was confirmed through MTE interviews. These activities are elaborated in Annex 12.
137. At the school-level, trainings with teachers on health and hygiene was expected to increase coverage of these topics with school children in McGovern-Dole supported schools. According to teachers meet in the field, most of these topics are already part of their school curriculum, with no new information specific to the McGovern-Dole project. Nearly all surveyed teachers reported that they “often” or “sometimes” discussed topics of good hygiene (98 percent) and/or nutrition (94 percent) with their students.
138. The quantitative survey with school children asked whether they talked about the topics of health, hygiene and nutrition in school. Students were less likely to report that these topics were covered in their classes as compared to teacher responses. The student’s responses are summarised in Figure 5. Overall, there were very minimal differences between student responses in the McGovern-Dole supported schools and the non-supported schools with slightly better coverage in the non-supported schools.

Figure 5: Proportion of students reporting receiving training on various topics at midline



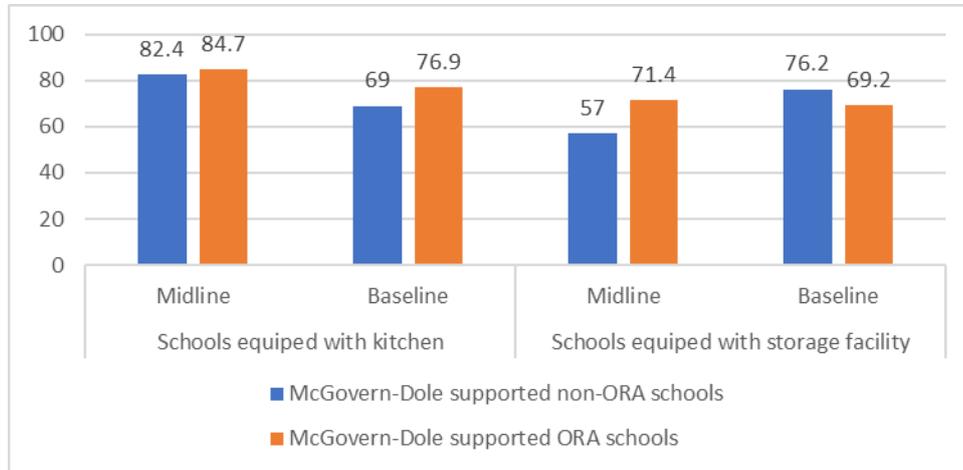
Non-ORA schools: Midline n=983; ORA schools: Midline n=233; non-supported schools: Midline n=822

Source: Evaluation teacher's survey

139. Less than half of students in the supported schools reported receiving information about food diversification and even less reported receiving information about micronutrients. The figure also shows that the students in supported ORA schools were less likely to report receiving any information (except on micronutrients), even compared to the non-supported schools. Interestingly, in ORA schools a considerably higher percentage of girls reported receiving training on these topics (55 percent) than boys (18 percent). One possibility is that these topics were provided more/more frequently to girls, perhaps because teachers felt it was more relevant (gender stereotyping). However, this theory has not been qualified by direct evaluation evidence.
140. **MGD 2.2. Improved knowledge of safe food preparation and storage practices / Activity 8. Support improved safe food storage and preparation.** Under this activity, WFP sub-contracted ACTED to construct/rehabilitate kitchens and storerooms and provide energy efficient stoves in schools in the Bouenza department. Figure 6 shows that there has been an increase in the number of schools equipped with kitchens (from 69 percent to 84.3 percent) in the supported non-ORA schools since baseline as well as in food storage facilities (from 76.2 percent to 86.3 percent). Importantly, the midline sample for ORA schools is much smaller as many ORA schools were not accessible at midline.

Therefore, the fact that a smaller percentage of ORA schools now have kitchens and/or food storage facilities should not be interpreted as a failure of the project. The final evaluation will include further evaluation of infrastructure conditions in both ORA and non-ORA schools.

Figure 6: School infrastructure in McGovern-Dole supported schools: kitchen and storage

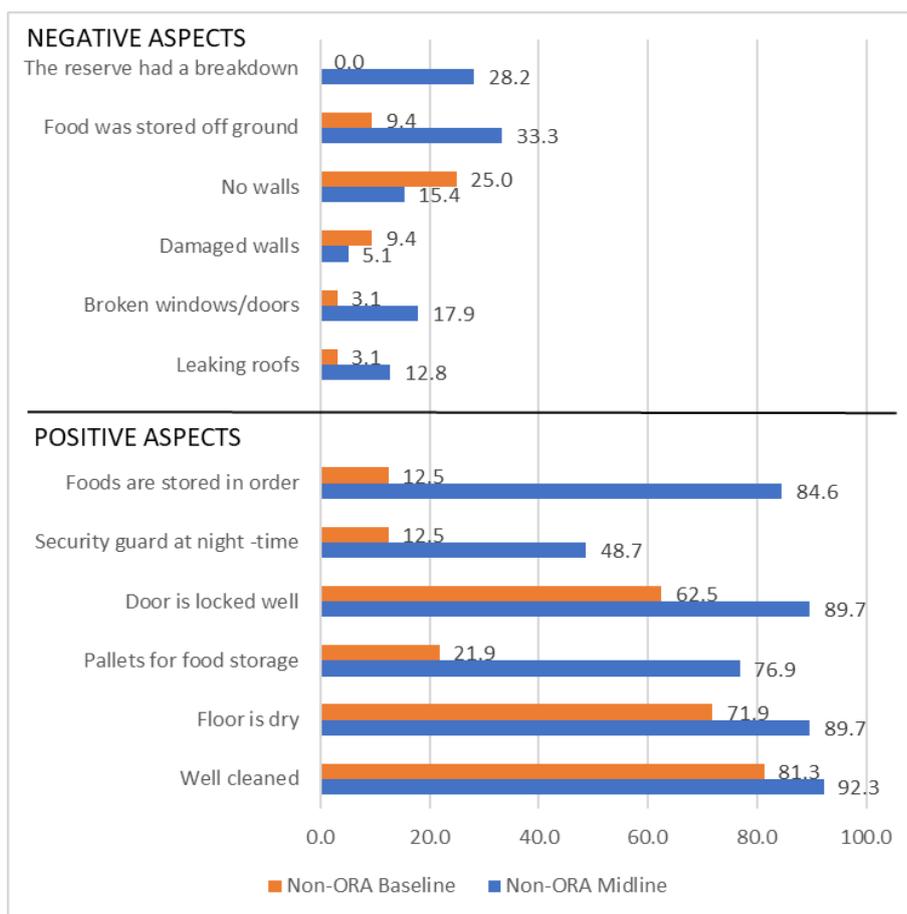


Source: Evaluation School Survey

In addition to assessing the number of kitchens and storerooms present, the evaluation collected data on their condition at both baseline and midline. The number of sampled ORA schools reporting a kitchen and food storage (n=4) is too small to be included in the figures as it may not be representative of the group.

141. Most of the food storage facilities in the non-ORA schools were in good condition (Figure 7) and an improvement in nearly all positive aspects of storage condition. However, there was also an increase in the proportion of schools reporting some negative conditions indicating that more work needs to be done to improve food storage facilities.

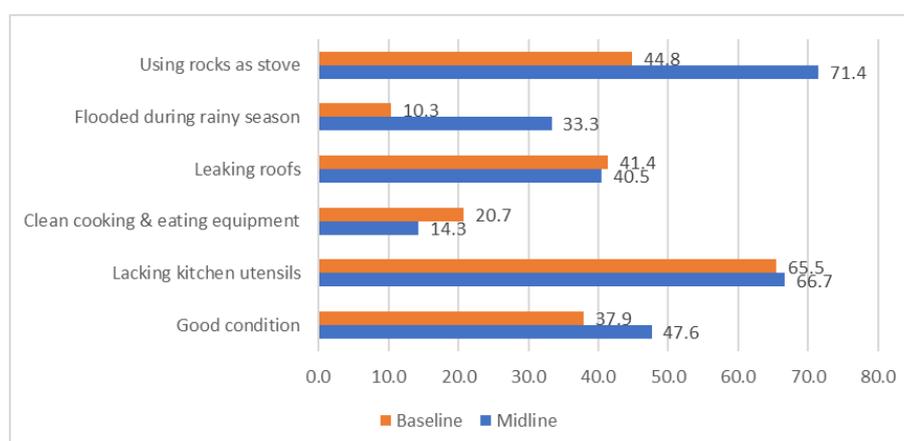
Figure 7: Condition of food storage facilities in McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools



Baseline n=32, Midline n=39 / Source: Evaluation school survey

142. Similarly, Figure 8 shows an improvement in the proportion of kitchens in ‘good condition’ at the McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools. However, the prevalence of some issues, most notably flooding and using rocks as a stove, had increased between baseline and midline.

Figure 8: Condition of kitchens in McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools



Baseline n=32, Midline n=42 / Source: Evaluation school survey

143. **MGD 2.3. Increased knowledge of nutrition / Activity 7: Promote improved nutrition:** The agreement between WFP and USDA includes several activities to promote improved nutrition

including developing a nutrition guide, community-based promotion of good health and hygiene, and supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) to establish a nutrition monitoring system, among others (see Annex 3).

144. The nutrition work was carried out by WFP in partnership with ACTED and UNICEF. Based on multiple KIIs, WFP's involvement in nutrition activities has been limited by the lack of involvement from the CO nutritionist. As a result, the nutrition guide has been developed largely by UNICEF. Recently, there has been a nutrition consultant employed with non-USDA funds to support the process of industrialised fortification of fofou flour (made from cassava) and mbala pinda (nutritious snack made from cassava and peanuts). These concrete actions help to reduce poverty by boosting local economy, building capacity of producers and valorisation of local products. Implementing those pilot project to all McGovern-Dole schools would be of high value for the beneficiaries and the communities. Occasionally, the consultant supported the McGovern-Dole nutrition interventions and in preparing for the application of a second McGovern-Dole phase.
145. **Nutrition guide development:** UNICEF had the task of developing a nutrition guide for the awareness campaigns on good health and nutrition. UNICEF based the guide on the food security and nutrition curriculum developed by UNESCO.¹⁰⁵
146. As explained at baseline, the development of the nutrition module by UNESCO was not specifically designed for the McGovern-Dole project but was part of an already existing UNESCO three-component ToT project covering a range of topics including a nutrition component initially planned for 500 teachers.¹⁰⁶ Out of the 163 teachers that ultimately benefited from the ToT, 103 participants are from primary schools, but only 52 are based in McGovern-Dole-supported departments. Even though some of the USDA funding went into the development of the module, neither WFP nor UNICEF or ACTED were part of this working group.
147. Whilst it makes sense to work with a curriculum which should be rolled out in schools, the original problem identified in the baseline that UNESCO curriculum did not promote adequate food groups to improve dietary diversity, has not been solved. Further, the MTE found that the curriculum is not appropriate for use in primary schools with language and illustrations more suited to secondary or adult education. The content would therefore need to be further adapted for use in primary schools.
148. **Training:** To roll out the nutrition guide, UNICEF followed a ToT approach, by first training six participants who in turn cascaded the training to another six participants each. This resulted in 36 trainers who were supposed to further roll out the training to teachers. According to UNICEF, their approach was not coordinated with UNESCO's approach. Whilst UNICEF monitored the cascading to 36 people, there was no further monitoring of the rollout to additional schools. UNESCO reported there was no budget for further rolling out the training to all teachers.
149. The percentage of teachers reporting receiving nutrition and health trainings is nearly four times higher in McGovern-Dole supported schools compared to non-supported schools (42 percent versus 11 percent). More could still be done to expand teacher coverage in the next cycle as results from the teacher's questionnaire indicate that some teachers never received any training from the project on health and nutrition issues (Table 16)

Table 16: Teachers taking part in nutrition and health training activities¹⁰⁷

	n*	Yes (%)	No (%)
McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools	83	28.90%	71.1%
McGovern-Dole supported ORA schools	19	42.10%	57.90%
Non-supported schools	84	13.1%	86.9%

Source: Teacher Survey

¹⁰⁵ "Module sur l'éducation à la sécurité alimentaire, nutritionnelle et la mise en oeuvre des classes vertes"

¹⁰⁶ WFP, Republic of Congo, FY2017 McGovern-Dole Proposal, 2017; page 20

¹⁰⁷ No gender disaggregated data available.

150. It is understood that the target group for nutrition guide training includes members of the school feeding committee (SFC) and the cooks, who will receive a different type of training. However, the ET received mixed reports from cooks about training receipt. Some of the cooks told the ET that they have not received any training, but that members of the SFC did. There is no information on this in the WFP reports. Some cooks also stated that they were given information on the measurements they need to apply to have the quantities adapted to the number of children. Other cooks reported to have heard about dietary diversity and they complained that there is need to diversify the food basket to be able to provide a better diet.
151. A key issue with training cooks is the high rotation of people doing the job, because people are not interested in staying long in a volunteer position. Therefore, even if the training is done once a year, due to the rotation, not all cooks will benefit from this training. WFP has distributed booklets with the main messages, implying that new cooks will need to train themselves by self-learning. Theoretically, the cooks that receive the initial training are supposed to train the other cooks in the school. The ET was not able to confirm whether the cascade training of cooks was happening. To confirm whether this activity is actually happening, the end-line survey will prepare a separate survey for cooks and will include questions on training in the questionnaires for the school feeding committees.
152. **Children's dietary diversity score (DDS):**¹⁰⁸ The MTE found an increase in the average DDS of McGovern-Dole supported school children since baseline (Annex 21, Table 16b) with slightly higher average DDS among McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools and the comparison non-supported schools when including the school meal in analysis. Importantly, when the school meal is excluded, the average scores among supported and non-supported ORA schools is almost exactly the same, demonstrating the contribution, though limited, of the school meals in increasing dietary diversity. However, the fact that, even when including the school meal, only about 10 percent of all sampled school children consume at least four food groups highlights continuing deficiencies in dietary diversity. As it will take time to increase dietary diversity, the presence of fortified foods in school meals is very important.
153. **Support to the MoH:** The MoH has only been minimally involved in program activities. The Ministry confirmed they were involved in the UNICEF ToT and were involved in UNESCO's development of the food security and nutrition module. However, according to the information from the MoH, there has not yet been any support from WFP or UNICEF to establish a nutrition monitoring system and the Ministry is only sporadically involved in WFP interventions even though the increased capacity of government institutions is a foundational result of the McGovern-Dole project.
154. **MGD 2.4. Increased access to clean water and sanitation services:** Increased access to sanitation services is directly linked to the SO2. To promote improved health, WFP and its partners ACTED and UNICEF addressed safe sanitation in target schools by constructing/rehabilitating latrines, kitchens and storerooms and water stations as well as providing handwashing kits.
155. According to the United Nations' SDG Report, one in five girls of primary-school age are not in school compared to one in six boys.¹⁰⁹ One reason for this difference is the lack of appropriate school sanitation facilities for girls once they reach puberty. This evidence justifies latrine construction/rehabilitation as an effective activity to increase enrollment. However, in general, there is need to further improve the situation for girls, especially post-puberty when menstruation becomes a key reason for non-attendance at school. UNICEF's latrines for girls are a bit bigger and have a disposal space for sanitary pads. In addition, the topic of menstrual hygiene is part of their awareness campaigns. It will be important for ACTED and UNICEF work with the same communication material to allow a unified and more holistic approach to addressing these gender-specific barriers.
156. In total, latrine construction and/ or rehabilitation was carried out in 30 schools, which is approximately 11 percent of all schools under the McGovern Dole project. Whilst ACTED did an

¹⁰⁸ The ET calculated the DDS based on consumption of 7 food groups to measure dietary diversity over a 24 hour period. It is internationally accepted, that if children reach 4 out of 7 food groups, they enjoy most likely an adequate diet as there is a high probability that they enjoy animal source foods as well as fruits and vegetables.

¹⁰⁹ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal Report, 2017.

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2017/thesustainabledevelopmentgoalsreport2017.pdf>

inventory of all schools in the Bouenza department and decided according to need, UNICEF schools were chosen in collaboration with the local authorities instead of basing selection on a comprehensive inventory of infrastructure needs to prioritize.

Table 17: Number of schools supported with latrine construction or rehabilitation

	SY 2018/19	SY2019/20	SY 2020/21	SY 2021/22
ACTED	11 schools in the Bouenza department			
UNICEF		7 schools in Likoula and Sangha regions	4 schools in Plateau 4 schools in Cuvette 4 schools in Pool	Plans to provide latrines in 2 pilot schools in Pool (year 4) and in 2 pilot schools in Bouenza

Source: Evaluation school survey

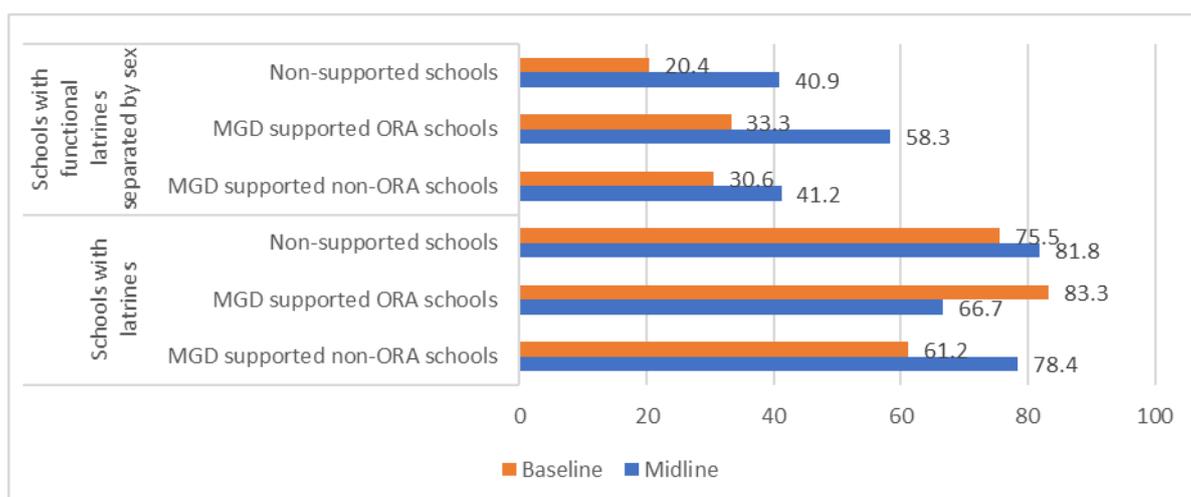
157. The INS data shows that in McGovern-Dole supported schools there is an average of 182 boys and 164 girls per functional latrine in public schools and 43 boys and 48 girls per functional latrine in ORA schools (see table 12b in Annex 19). This is above the international Sphere standard¹¹⁰ of one toilet for every 30 girls and one for every 60 boys. The project may have limited impact on reducing health-related absences given the continued overcrowding of sanitation facilities. As WHO states, “the lack of safe sanitation contributes to diarrhoea, a major public health concern and a leading cause of disease [...]”¹¹¹ Without addressing these issues, the project is also likely to limit the effectiveness of project implementation on improving gender equity as, as stated by the WHO, “Lack of access to suitable sanitation facilities is also a major cause of risks and anxiety, especially for women and girls”.¹¹²
158. Figure 9 below shows that by MTE, 78 percent of McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools have latrines, and most of them (84.8 percent) are separated by sex. This is slightly less than the percentage of non-supported schools with latrines (83.3 percent), although no non-supported schools have separated latrines. Less ORA schools have latrines (66.7 percent) and around half are separated (58.3 percent).

110 The Sphere standards are a set of principles and minimum humanitarian standards in four technical areas of humanitarian response: WASH, Food security and nutrition, Shelter and settlement, and Health. Available at <https://spherestandards.org/humanitarian-standards/>

111 WHO, Guidelines on Sanitation and Health, 2018.

112 WHO, Guidelines on Sanitation and Health, 2018.

Figure 9: Proportion of schools with latrines and sex-separated latrines



Non-ORA schools: Baseline n=49, Midline n=51; ORA schools: Baseline n=12, Midline n=12; non-supported schools: Baseline n=49, Midline n=44

Source: Evaluation school survey

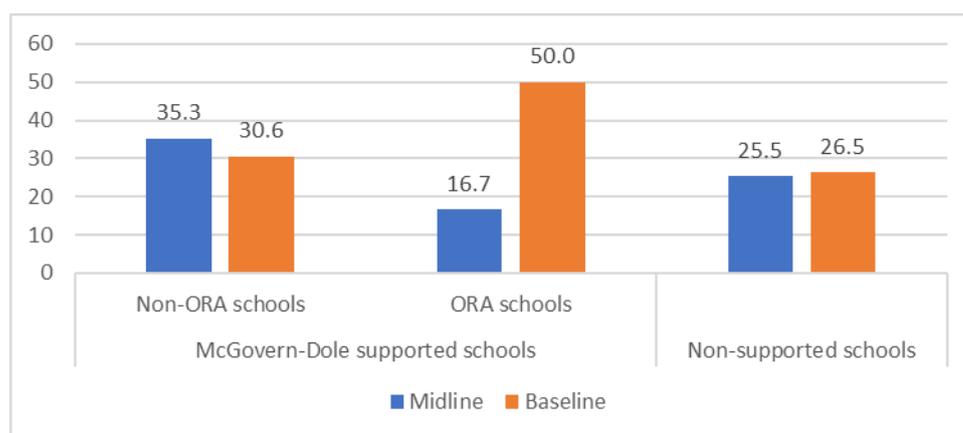
159. From January 2018 to January 2020, ACTED has been a major sub-recipient concerning activities linked to WASH. In addition to constructing latrines, WFP asked ACTED to intervene in the 60 schools that are part of the McGovern-Dole project in the Bouenza department¹¹³. Over the period of two years, ACTED achieved the following results: Construction of 22 kitchens and storage rooms; Distribution of kitchen kits to all assisted schools;¹¹⁴ Construction of 11 sanitation blocks with four latrines per block and associated hand washing devices; Formation of 11 hygiene brigades responsible of maintaining the latrine facilities; Sensitisation sessions on WASH in each school and associated community; Distribution of WASH kits to 704 vulnerable households and sensitisation on WASH.¹¹⁵
160. Similarly, UNICEF has provided 150 handwashing kits in two targeted regions in SY 2019/20, and in SY2020/21 provided 200 handwashing kits for 84 schools. Altogether, UNICEF was able to provide these facilities to around 140 schools (out of 318), about 44 percent of all targeted schools.
161. Moving forward, it would be helpful for WFP to better understand the state of water availability and handwashing facilities in each UNICEF assisted school to understand whether the distribution reached the neediest schools and the state of water supply and hand washing facilities in the remaining schools. Whether or not the handwashing kits are well maintained and regularly used will be part of the endline evaluation.
162. Another important aspect of MGD 2.4 is improved access to safe food preparation and storage. The RF logic focuses specifically on the availability of clean water for cooking. Figure 10 below shows that McGovern-Dole supported schools are more likely to have improved water sources compared to non-supported schools (32 percent versus 22 percent), but there is more to be done to further expand coverage. The effectiveness of this project component could benefit from expanded activities to address availability of clean water at all schools is likely to detract from realization of project objectives overall.

¹¹³ More precisely in the districts of Loudima, Madingou, Kayes and Mouyondzi.

¹¹⁴ Kitchen kits are composed of three fuel efficient stoves (one big and two small), three cooking pots (one big and two small), two ladles and plates and spoons according to the number of pupils.

¹¹⁵ WASH kits comprised one 25L jerrycan, one bucket, one box of 160 Aquatabs and two bars of soap.

Figure 10: Proportion of schools with an improved water source

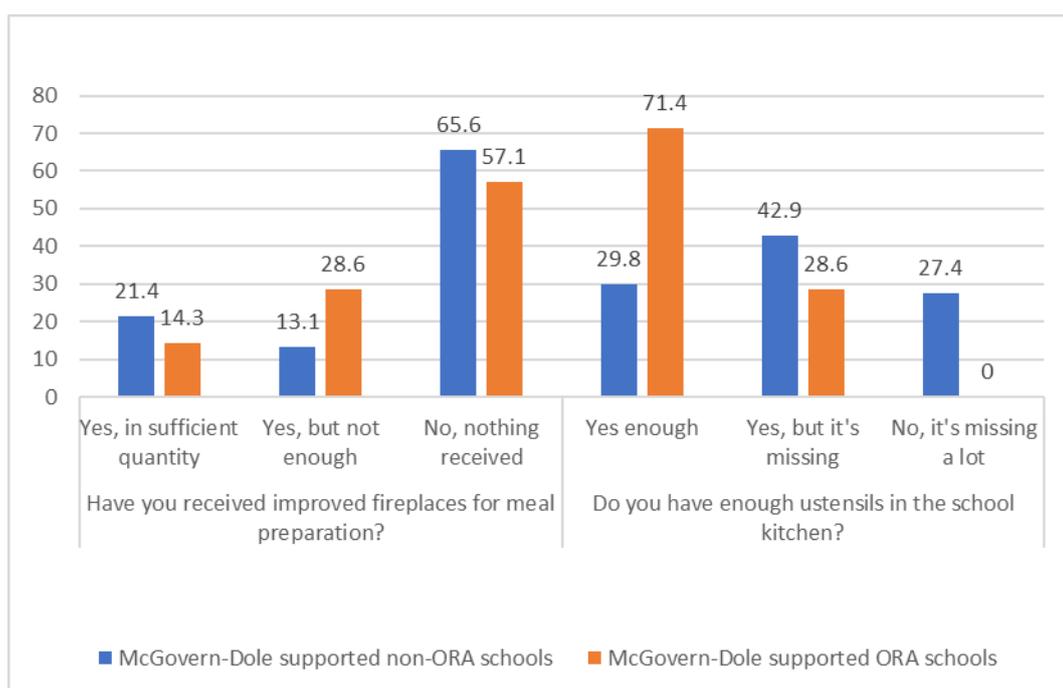


Non-ORA schools: Baseline n=49, Midline n=51; ORA schools: Baseline n=12, Midline n=12; non-supported schools: Baseline n=49, Midline n=44

Source: Evaluation school survey

163. An error by the ET led to survey questions about hand washing habits amongst the school children for the mid-term survey being removed from the questionnaire. The ET will therefore ensure that this section is re-integrated into the questionnaire at endline, to enable assessment of whether handwashing practices have improved.
164. **MGD 2.5. Increased access to preventative health interventions:** As per the project agreement, WFP collaborates with UNICEF and WHO to support the logistics and distribution expenses of deworming tablets provided by the government. Deworming is done on a yearly basis by the WHO in all schools in the country, both non-ORA and ORA. However, the number of children reached by this activity is not yet included in the WFP project monitoring, or in the SAPRs. The results of this activity will therefore need to be further assessed at endline.
165. **MGD 2.6. Increased access to requisite food preparation and storage tools and equipment:** Fuel efficient stoves have been distributed to all 60 schools in the Bouenza department. Each school received one large stove and two smaller ones. These stoves help cooks avoid the health issues of inhaling smoke when cooking inside and reduces firewood consumption. However, the MTE survey found that only 7 percent of the sampled McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools have an energy saving stove, and none of the sampled ORA schools (see Annex 22, MTE table 4). Adding project activities to address the availability of food preparation and storage tools would further contribute to the realization of project objectives overall.
166. Evaluation interviews and field visits indicate that the stoves that have been provided have limited use because they are not powerful enough to cook the large quantities of food required by the school meals.
167. The MTE school survey found that 17.6 percent of McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools and 14.3 percent ORA schools reported having sufficient fuel-efficient stoves for meal preparation. Similarly, 27.5 percent of McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools and 70.4 percent of ORA schools said they had enough cooking utensils in the school kitchen. More data on the availability of fuel-efficient stoves and utensils can be found in Annex 22.

Figure 11: Fireplaces and cooking utensils in supported schools



Source: School Feeding Committee Survey

SO2: Increase use of health and dietary practices: Overall, the evaluation found that the activities implemented to support the increased use of health and dietary practices have had mixed results. WFP's involvement in nutrition activities has been limited by the lack of involvement from the CO nutritionist. Training materials that were originally intended to provide information to school children on the benefits of a healthy diet, including the importance of eating a wide range of foods (dietary diversity) are more suitable for adult or older learners and do not include an adequate conceptualization of dietary diversity. Teachers reported that the topics included are already part of their school curriculum, with no new information specific to the McGovern-Dole project. Further, the number of teachers trained by UNICEF in nutrition and health was not monitored, and the MTE found that most teachers interviewed reported that they have not received any training.

The planned work with UNICEF to help the MoH establish a nutrition monitoring system as also not yet been done, and WFP does not have regular engagement with the MoH.

Work by WFP's partners ACTED and UNICEF to support construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure has been more successful, with both an increase in the number and improvement in the conditions of kitchens and food storage facilities found in the supported non-ORA schools since baseline. Despite improvements within supported ORA schools, they still have less school feeding related infrastructures compared to the supported non-ORA schools, indicating a need for further investment. Distribution of fuel-efficient stoves has been done but they are in limited use because they were not able to cope with the large volumes of food required for school meals.

Similarly, support to the construction and rehabilitation of school latrines has been ongoing but the percentage of schools with sex-separated latrines is still well below international SPHERE standards. Like results of school feeding infrastructure, this indicates a need for further investment. Water availability in schools also remains an issue. All schoolchildren receive deworming medication from WHO/UNICEF each year. However, data on this is missing from the SAPR.

168. **Foundational results / Activity 1: Build capacity:** Capacity building is part of the foundational result that support both RFs. The aim of capacity building work is to increase capacity of government institutions and community groups on school feeding and improve policy and regulatory framework.
169. **National capacity of government institutions:** WFP has spent several years working with the Ministry of Education on institutional capacity building, including successful advocacy for the creation of a unit responsible for the implementation and management of school feeding.¹¹⁶ In December 2019, the decree for the creation of the National School Feeding Directorate (NSFD – Direction de l'alimentation scolaire) was approved. With the support of WFP, the Ministry of Education validated the Action Plan for the implementation of the NSFP, and in December 2019, the government signed the decree finally approving the NSFP.
170. In October 2020, the NSFD services had been decentralised and present in each of the seven departments targeted by the McGovern-Dole project. The School Feeding Services (SFS-Services d'alimentation scolaire) are embedded in the Department Directorate of Education with one state official per department.
171. As per the USDA/WFP project agreement, WFP has supported various aspects of capacity strengthening for NSFD and SFS and the school inspectors as per Box 1.
172. As observed during the field visits, the SFS does not yet have any capacity to work. This is mainly due to COVID-19 as some activities planned for 2020 were postponed until 2021 (further training of the SFS and provision of motorbikes). Additionally, WFP is planning to provide technical assistance at the national level by setting up a server for data storage. International study trips to WFP's Centre of Excellence Against Hunger in Cote D'Ivoire that were cancelled due to COVID-19 are also still planned for 2021. The study trips are intended to give the NSFD an idea of how neighboring countries implement their school feeding projects.
173. Since the economic crises in 2016, the government stopped all financial engagement in school feeding activities. The provision of national funds to school feeding is fundamental to sustainability. As a result, WFP continues to advocate for national funds/contributions to school feeding, with some positive results. In 2019/20, the government provided 47 MT of salt and XAF five million (USD 9,000) for transportation. In 2020/21, the government provided 72 MT of salt and XAF 11 million (USD 20,000) for transportation.

Box 1: WFP agreed support to NSFD and SFS

- Strengthening capacity on the NSFD and SFS on management and monitoring of school canteens activities in general
- Unlimited Internet access for the NSFD office in Brazzaville
- 10 desktops (3 for Brazzaville and one per department).
- 4x4 vehicle for the NSFD
- Strengthening capacity of management and monitoring of inspectors (collect and submit reports, monitoring of schools)
- Financial support to inspector for transportation and phone (XAF 25,000 per month - \$45)

Table 18: Government contributions to school feeding

2019/20	47 MT of salt and XAF 5 million (USD 9,000) for transportation
2020/21	72 MT of salt and XAF 11 million (USD 20,000)

¹¹⁶ In 2015, WFP supported the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) and the development of the Action Plan for school feeding. WFP also provided technical assistance for the development of the National School Feeding Policy in 2016, and the creation of the NSFD in 2018.

174. WFP also carries out advocacy work on school feeding through the National Education Sector Working Group with UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank. In 2020, through this working group, WFP and its partners managed to secure funding from the Global Partnership in Education (GPE). The funding of USD 7 million aimed to support the reopening of schools in the context of the COVID-19. WFP also received USD 810,000 for the school feeding project in urban and peri-urban areas most affected by the socio-economic impacts, where 22,000 students will benefit from a local daily school meal over the school year 2020-2021 (out of the McGovern-Dole project).
175. **Capacity of community groups and schools:** As well as providing capacity building at the institutional level, WFP also continuously reinforces capacity building at the individual level, not only to the state officials (NSFD and inspectors), but also at the school level. At the beginning of each school year, the project provides training to all school directors, their assistant, one school feeding committee member and one cook. This training, run by UNICEF, is mostly about school feeding management and sensitisation on good WASH and dietary practices. This is meant to ensure that each school is aware of the correct management of the school feeding activities and is sensitised in good WASH and dietary practices. However, the implementation of the WASH and dietary practices are often limited, as communities lack of the means to do so. Furthermore, high rotation of cooks, and uncertainty on the success of the cascade training module, lead to doubts on the retention of this information.
176. WFP is also committed to strengthening local agriculture and school communities to promote sustainability as articulated in the Action Plan for the implementation of the NSFP. In the schools under the McGovern-Dole project, this is mainly done by raising awareness on the importance of community contributions of locally produced ingredients for the school meals. This is done during the annual trainings for school feeding management (described above). However, according to the parents and cooks interviewed during the field visits FGDs, it seems that the contribution of vegetables, leafy greens or fruits by parents is limited. Contributions of salt has been seen in a school lacking salt. Given that WFP is targeting the poorest communities, it is understandable that parents may have difficulties contributing to diversify school meals.
177. WFP is also committed to continue working on the cassava fortification project through which it tries to introduce fortified casava flour to prevent malnutrition and promote purchase of locally grown food for school canteens. In 2019, a field study was undertaken by the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), University of Greenwich to assess the value chain for industrial fofou flour in the Republic of Congo, and cassava flour as a fortification vehicle. In 2021, WFP, in collaboration with the same institute, developed specifications for industrialised fofou flour incorporating consumer taste preferences. Additional studies still need to be done before introducing cassava flour into school canteens.¹¹⁷ To support HGSP, WFP has also set up seven pilot schools in the Bouenza department where cooks receive cash to buy locally grown food for the canteen.¹¹⁸ Neither of these activities is supported by USDA funds.
178. WFP's implementing partner in the Sangha department, the Project éducative du développement durable (PEDD), also benefited from capacity building in school feeding management and monitoring which allowed them to correctly implement the school feeding activities (implementation, monitoring and reporting).
179. **Other results / Contribution to gender transformation.** The MTE identified several areas of the project where gender considerations are important. Firstly, the project has actively encouraged community committees to put women into leadership positions. This result has been very positive. The MTE found that the percentage of female presidents on school feeding committees has substantially increased and surpassed the very modest objective for the end of the entire program. The increase in the number of female presidents is accompanied by a reduction in the vice-president

117 Natural Resource Institute, Food and Markets Department, University of Greenwich, Consumer (Children's) Acceptability of industrial fortified fofou flour, January 2021

118 This was done in line with the Home-Grown School Feeding development initiative, through a campaign funded by Share the Meal and a German private donor.

- position. The presence of women in both positions together have seen a visible increase (26.1 percent at baseline to 36.1 percent at midline). This result already exceeds the expectation of the project.
180. The percentage of women in a treasurer position has remained stable, but the percentage of women holding a vice treasurer position has more than doubled (from 22.2 percent to 53.8 percent), and by the MTE there are considerably more female administrators in the committees (from 16.7 percent to 75.8 percent), exceeding expectations. The MTE found that results in this area are very encouraging (see custom indicator 9 in Annex 4). During the endline evaluation, the ET will ensure that separate interviews are conducted with some of the female presidents or treasurers to investigate their position within the committees and whether their voices are heard, and their decisions actioned.
 181. However, the project has missed several opportunities to help transform cook's lives, who are mostly women. According to field interviews, most cooks have never received training, and are not paid, despite them being critical for project implementation. During FGDs, some cooks report receiving one glass of rice each day after work. As a result of the lack of payment, there is significant rotation of cooks to minimize the workload per person, which contributes to limited coverage of trainings for cooks. The issue of no remuneration was raised during the baseline and seems to be a permanent problem.
 182. The project also missed an opportunity to reduce heavy daily workloads of primarily female cooks through ensuring that schools have improved water sources, enabling the cooks to have easy access to water for food preparation. As it is, cooks often carry water to school.
 183. The promotion of gender equality and women and girl's empowerment in schools has many more dimensions. One of them is to take care of the specific needs of menstruating girls. UNICEF has started to include the issue in their own training, and they constructed latrines which have a separate disposal opportunity for sanitary pads. However, only partial implementation by UNICEF and lack of provision of menstrual hygiene resources in poor communities will limit the effectiveness of this component of promoting gender equality and empowerment in schools.
 184. The MTE also found that school children are reporting gender-based violence, which they observe and experience in their surroundings. It is therefore of utmost importance to start integrating prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and gender transformative' messages as early as possible in their lives to have a sustainable impact for the entire country.
 185. During the 2018 baseline survey, the ET team learned that primary school children are already aware of the GBV problem in their communities. The Ministry of Women's Affairs¹¹⁹ reported that they developed a curriculum on gender issues for primary schools, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). However, at the time, the Ministry did not have the means to roll out this curriculum to be implemented in primary schools. During the MTE it was reported that the curriculum has still not been rolled out.
 186. In general, the evaluation found that the availability of gender disaggregated data and inclusion of sufficient GEWE considerations in the project is still inadequate and there is need to improve the M&E system in terms of gender sensitivity.
 187. **Important reference:** The MTE results of all the McGovern-Dole project indicators are included in a complete ITT in Annex 4 (output indicators) Annex 5 (Outcome indicators) and Annex 25 (Comprehensive description of all McGovern-Dole project indicators).
 188. **M&E:** As stated in the ToR, the PMP is the tool that is used to define the required indicators and their measurement methods for the performance of the project. The ET's evaluation of the effectiveness of the project is hindered by the lack of adequate use of the PMP. Key success factors for an efficient and effective M&E system depend on close coordination between partners and on WFP staff capacity, as a common understanding and use of indicators is essential. Without a common measurement approach, indicators will not be harmonised, which limits the usefulness of data for determining the effectiveness of the project. As noted at baseline, the McGovern-Dole project goes beyond a

¹¹⁹ Ministère de la promotion de la femme et de l'intégration de la femme au développement

transitional school feeding project as stated in its official title: “McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Project”. This means that WFP needs to work in close coordination with partners’ M&E divisions that have an expertise in different areas of intervention such as education, nutrition, health, sanitation, capacity building, etc.

189. The ET has several concerns about the monitoring of the project including the following:
- The finalised version provided to the ET by the WFP CO and the ITTs in the SAPRs sent to USDA do not have the same yearly targets as the SAPR narrative reports and do not use the updated version of the PMP.
 - The finalised version of the PMP provided to the ET by the WFP CO and the PMP in the SAPR sent to USDA do not always have the same explanations on what certain indicators are supposed to measure (St. Ind. # 20 and Cust. Ind # 1, 2).
 - Some indicators are not reported in the ITT of the SAPRs (St. Ind. # 5, 12, 19, 21, 25 and 26 as well as Cust. Ind # 5, 7 and 9).
 - None of the indicators reported in the SAPR ITTs are disaggregated by gender.
 - Certain information from the narrative reports is not in the ITT (St. Ind. # 12 : Number of educational policies, regulations and/or administrative procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USDA assistance).
190. Another tool used by WFP to monitor and evaluate its interventions is the dashboard presented in section 2.1 (see also Annex 17). The dashboard is mainly used to monitor school canteen management (food stock, food consumption, number of pupils eating, etc.). This allows WFP to monitor at the school level how well the food is managed and allows WFP to spot precisely where issues arise. For example, it helps to detect schools where the food/pupil ratio is unusual compared to other schools and allows WFP to rapidly pin down schools making misuse of food. The dashboard has the advantage of rapidly analysing the situation in any given school (subject to internet connectivity at WFP office or sub-offices) compared to Excel files or reports.
191. The dashboard provides general information for every school such as the presence of latrines, hand-washing facilities, soap, contributions of parents to the project, etc. While this information is essential for project monitoring as well as project planning, more detailed information is needed to increase the relevance for project planning. For example, regarding latrines, the information collected is the presence or not of latrines and the state of them. No information is collected concerning the number nor the separation for boys and girls. The dashboard provides data on parents’ contribution in terms of food to the canteen without being specific on the number of days per week, the quantity, food items, etc.
192. In the context of a McGovern-Dole project, where literacy and nutrition sensitisation are the strategic objectives, the dashboard, as it is for the moment, is not sufficient to monitor the entire project as per the PMP. Though the CO can use reports from implementing partners to provide missing information, triangulating findings using the dashboard could make the monitoring of the project more effective. In this sense, data more specific to any McGovern-Dole project e.g., involvement of teachers in teaching-learning activities, availability of early grade reading (EGR) material, library corners in schools, use of teaching-learning resources while teaching, have not yet been collected through the process monitoring although they could help tracking the performance of the project.

2.4. EFFICIENCY

193. **Targeting:** In selecting the target schools for inclusion in the project, WFP correctly intervenes in the most vulnerable locations around the country. Targeting was done in 2018 with direct input from the Ministry of Education. This was the most efficient way for it to be done as the results are accepted by the authorities and enables government buy-in when additional areas are targeted, contributing to sustainability of the project. ACTED’s targeting for the school infrastructure component, based on a comprehensive inventory of school infrastructure to determine the neediest schools, is efficient. UNICEF’s approach should follow this logic.
194. **Logistics:** Transportation is a major challenge in Congo. According to WFP’s Logistic Unit, roads have been deteriorating over the last years, and not enough is done by the Government to repair and/or

maintain them. WFP outsources most of its transportation of food commodities to private companies but has difficulties finding companies with vehicles for delivering small quantities (under 500 kg) to remote areas with poor road conditions.

195. These logistics challenges often result in delays in providing food to schools at the right time. As described earlier, food distribution has not reached targets: 29.7 percent of project target in 2018, 58.2 percent in 2019 and 63.8 percent in 2020 as per the ACRs.¹²⁰ WFP recognises that food may sometimes arrive one or two weeks late due to bad access to the most remote areas. WFP is carrying out a road and logistic assessment in order to be more efficient in food distribution to schools located in remote areas. According to the information gathered in the field, the quality of the food received by the schools is acceptable.
196. **Cost per beneficiary:** This evaluation has not included any calculation of the cost per school-feeding beneficiary. This is due to discrepancies in data on the number of beneficiaries benefiting from the project activity, a lack of clear definitions of which activities which are related to school feeding per se (transport, kitchen rehabilitation, training of school committees, cost of food, etc.), and which activities are literacy related. If the CO is willing and able to provide sufficient information, this analysis could be done during the endline evaluation. In that case, the CO will need to provide a breakdown of cost by activities. Only costs directly related to school feeding activities should be considered (food delivery, training in schools for school feeding management, M&E, etc.).
197. **Leveraging of USDA funding:** Support from USDA through the McGovern-Dole project has enabled WFP to achieve its ambitions for school feeding in the country. Key informant interviews indicate that before 2017, WFP's school feeding activities had suffered various funding cuts. As the primary school feeding actor in Congo, WFP has managed to leverage USDA's support not only to implement the McGovern-Dole project but also to engage other partners in school feeding activities, secure additional funding and develop complementary activities directly linked to the McGovern-Dole project.
198. The Share the Meal campaign¹²¹ in October 2019, raised USD 300,000 which has served to promote HGSF in five pilot schools in the Bouenza department. The modality used was providing school committees with vouchers to buy local products in the markets, targeted shops, and surrounding market gardening. This activity continued in 2020 and 2021.
199. With the remaining funds from Share the Meal, and additional funds from other donors (Canada, Mastercard, Global Partnership for Education (GPE)) secured during 2020 in response to the impacts of COVID-19 in the education sector, WFP was able to support the expansion of their HGSF project, with represented 25 percent of students receiving a daily meal in Congo in SY 2020/21.¹²²
200. In 2020, WFP, together with WHO and UNICEF, received the Sustainable Development Goal Fund grant to strengthen national capacities to deliver quality social protection services to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations, particularly indigenous ones, in the Lekoumou department.
201. In 2020, WFP also linked the school feeding activity with other activities focused on smallholder farmers' support, or with the Food-Assistance-for-Asset (FFA) activities. In the Pool department, school committees can now buy fish and vegetables from the groups engaged in FFA rehabilitation activities.
202. The national education sector group, for which WFP is a proactive member, also secured funding from the GPE. This funding of USD 7 million supported the reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP also received USD 810,000 for the school feeding project in urban and peri-urban

¹²⁰ This is not an indicator used for USDA reporting in the PMP

¹²¹ Donations from the ShareTheMeal App support various WFP operations ranging from resilience building and school feeding projects to providing food assistance in emergencies. Since launching the app in 2015, WFP has helped provide aid to some of the largest food crises in the world (<https://sharethemeal.org/en/values.html>)

¹²² There is an overlap between HGSF activities and school feeding supported by McGovern Dole funding according to the 2020 and 2021 WFP ACR.

areas most affected by the socio-economic impacts, with which 22,000 students have benefited from a local daily school meal over the SY 2020/21.

203. Outside the COVID-19 response, WFP received additional funding for school feeding from the European Union (USD 243,500) and from WPD (USD 96,076).
204. WFP, through the McGovern-Dole project, also managed to re-engage the government into contributing to school feeding activities as it used to before 2016. The government's contribution has consisted of the provision of salt and cash for handling. Details are given under the effectiveness criteria above.

2.5. IMPACT

205. According to the two McGovern-Dole RFs, all activities are designed to contribute to two objectives: SO1: improved literacy of school age children, and SO2: improved use of health, nutrition and dietary practices.
206. **Improving literacy of school age children:** The improvement of students' literacy depends on the successful achievement of many, interrelated factors. The logic model developed by USDA highlights: improving the quality of literacy instruction (MGD 1.1), attentiveness of pupils (MGD 1.2), and student attendance (MGD 1.3) as the primary pathways to achieving improved literacy of school aged children (SO1).
207. When one or more elements are missing, the achievement of the model is threatened. In this case, the development of a project for teaching literacy, production and distribution of teaching and learning materials, and training of teachers to use the new materials to enable them to effectively teach literacy, have not been done.
208. In the absence of activities related to MGD 1.1, the impact of improved quality of literacy instruction on literacy outcomes cannot be assessed. Measurement of changes in literacy can only be attributed to improved attentiveness and student attendance.
209. The indicator to assess students' performance in literacy is defined as "Percent of students who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text".¹²³ This indicator was introduced into the WFP Corporate Results Framework (2017-2021) as part of the school feeding recommended indicators.¹²⁴
210. To measure this indicator, a literacy assessment is needed using specific tools – PASEC. At baseline, an evaluation team from the Département des Études et de la Planification (DEP) (Department for Studies and Planning) within MEPPSA, with expertise in PASEC from the CONFEMEN,¹²⁵ conducted a literacy test in the sampled schools. A similar test has been replicated during the MTE by the same national team. The purpose of the literacy test is specifically to measure the reading performance of school children at the end of two grades of primary school (CP2), according to the primary school curriculum – i.e. "All learner readers should be able to read and understand a short, simple and familiar message". A comparison of the PASEC and McGovern-Dole indicators can be found in Annex 26.
211. The PASEC is an international exercise carried out every five years through several French speaking countries members of the CONFEMEM. "The PASEC methodological model is based on the measurement of fundamentals skills in language of instruction and mathematics, at the start and end of primary school, based on a sample of students representative of the school population in each country."¹²⁶ The specific literacy test implemented by the PASEC team as part of the external evaluation is limited to the McGovern-Dole target areas and has not been designed to be

123 https://www.fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2015-05/food_for_progress_and_mcgoverndole_indicators_and_definitions.pdf

124 WFP/EB.2/2018/5-B/Rev.1

125 Conférence des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie / Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries

126 Confemen, PASEC 2014 Education System Performance in Francophone Countries, 2015

representative of the national primary school population. The PASEC report can be found in Annex 27.

212. **Proficiency levels:** The PASEC2019 framework includes a skills scale and a “sufficient” skills threshold. The assessment is used to determine the proportion of students who have a greater probability of mastering (above the threshold) or not mastering (below the threshold) the knowledge and skills deemed essential for the normal pursuit of the education without difficulty.¹²⁷ This approach is in line with USDA’s indicator measurement requirements.¹²⁸ Table 19 below shows the results of the baseline and midline reading assessments.

Table 19: Proportion of sampled students at each level of reading proficiency

Total score	Proficiency levels	Percentage of students		Description of skills
		Baseline	Midline	
15 to 20	Level 4	3	5.4	Students have reached a level of written comprehension that allows them to read independently words, a sentence, a text, in which they are led to find, combine and interpret information. Thus, they can develop their knowledge and participate in life in society.
10 to 14	Level 3	6.9	6.3	Students can identify the meaning of isolated words, understand short sentences and have difficulty understanding texts about twenty words.
“Sufficient skills threshold”				
5 to 9	Level 2	17.3	15.4	Students can identify the meaning of isolated words, understand short sentences and have difficulty understanding texts.
2 to 4	Level 1	27.2	33.5	Students are barely able to identify the meaning of the written words. They have great difficulties in deciphering and identifying letters and syllables.
0 to 1	Level 0	45.6	39.4	Students have significant difficulty decoding the meaning of words, reading and understanding sentences, and understanding text in early contact with written language.

Source: PASEC literacy tests 2018 and 2021

213. The comparison of student’s reading skills between baseline and mid-term shows very minimal overall improvement in performance. At baseline, 90.1 percent of students were below the sufficient skills threshold.¹²⁹ At midline, the figure is similar, at 88.3 percent. This means that only approximately 11 percent of student have appropriate grade level skills by the end of two years of primary school, and only 5.4 percent can understand information in words, sentences and text.
214. **Proficiency levels by school type:** Table 18 shows student proficiency levels according to the type of school attend. The proportion of students with passing literacy was extremely low within all types of schools. Differences were minimal between schools.

¹²⁷ PASEC2019 Qualité des systèmes éducatifs en Afrique subsaharienne francophone, Performances et Environnement de l’enseignement-apprentissage au primaire, CONFEMEM, 2020.

¹²⁸ Proportion of learners who attain the specified threshold at the end of two grades of primary schooling, the beginning of the third year of primary schooling, or the equivalent levels of accelerated learning projects.

¹²⁹ There is a small decrease in the percentage of students performing at level 0 (from 45.6 to 39.4%) and a limited increase at the upper level of the scale (from 3.0 to 5.4% at level 4).

Table 20: Percentage of students by skill level and type of school

School type	Percentage of students per proficiency levels				
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
McGovern-Dole supported non-ORA schools	18.80%	18.80%	5.70%	1.90%	0.80%
McGovern-Dole supported ORA schools	4.50%	4.00%	4.70%	1.00%	0.50%
Non-supported schools	16.10%	11.50%	5.00%	3.30%	1.10%
Total	39.40%	33.50%	15.40%	6.30%	5.40%

Source: PASEC literacy tests 2021

215. **Proficiency levels by gender:** As was already the case at baseline, at mid-term boys and girls have similar performance in reading, with only minor differences.

Table 21: Percentage of students by skill level and gender

Student's gender		Percentage of students per proficiency levels				
		Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
	Male	19.80%	16.20%	8.10%	8.10%	2.60%
	Female	19.70%	17.30%	7.30%	3.40%	2.90%
Total		39.40%	33.50%	15.40%	6.30%	5.40%

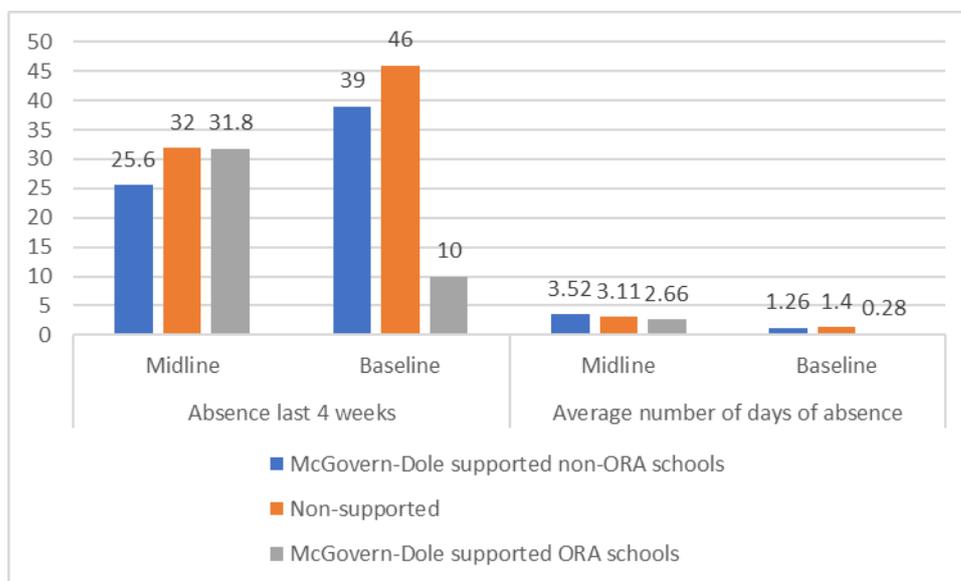
Source: PASEC literacy tests 2021

216. **Evolution of student's performance:** It was established at baseline that the project target was to progressively increase the percentage of students above the "sufficient" skills threshold to reach 80 percent at the end of the project in 2022. This target was determined based on the results of the PASEC2014 which showed that 38 percent of students were above the "sufficient" threshold in French language at early primary.¹³⁰ This target has eventually been revised to align with the actual results of the literacy test carried out in 2018 as part of the baseline study (see Std Ind#26 in Annex 5).
217. According to this progression, the targeted result for Year four is 13.7 percent while the effective result from the literacy test carried out by the PASEC team that year is 11.7 percent. With only one year of implementation left, and with inadequate literacy activities being implemented, it is unlikely that the project will reach its literacy target.
218. **Improved use of health, nutrition and dietary practices.** The results described under effectiveness of SO2 indicate that the McGovern-Dole project has not yet made any progress in improving the nutritional situation of school children.
219. The roll out of the nutrition curriculum did not take place due to a lack of funding, and the UNESCO "des classes verte" curriculum cannot be used for primary school-aged children without adaptation.
220. There is also little contribution from the communities when it comes to supplementing the school feeding food basket, reducing the dietary diversity of the school meal. The level of poverty in the targeted communities is perhaps the main obstacle in getting more local food and more voluntary work for the project.
221. While effort was made to improve WASH facilities in schools, it was insufficient to substantially improve the situation. This is true for the installation of latrines as well as the situation of water points at the school premises. UNICEF has started to construct latrines for girls with disposal facilities for sanitary pads and has included menstrual hygiene into their hygiene training. However, there is no complementing program to provide access to sanitary pads.

130 PASEC (2017). PASEC2014 – Performances du système éducatif congolais : Compétences et facteurs de réussite au primaire. PASEC, CONFEMEN, Dakar.

222. The project’s health and nutrition activities are intended to improve children’s health and contribute to reduced health-related school absence. The pupils survey shows a reduced absence rate during the last four weeks – however, the average duration of their absence is increasing (see Tables 3 and 4 in the pupils’ survey). Both trends were consistent across supported and non-supported schools. Difference in differences analysis at endline will help evaluate whether the project has made contributions to the reduction of absence or whether it is due to external factors.

Figure 12: Absence/attendance rate



223. The evaluation looked at the reasons why children were absent from school. The predominant reason for being absent was illness, where the proportion of students reporting this rationale increased substantially comparing baseline (59.0 percent) to MTE (70.3 percent). The data on the symptoms of illness needs to be interpreted with caution. First, the data are self-reported by children and thus not a medical assessment. Secondly, it seems that the baseline and MTE survey teams might have had a different approach. During the MTE, students gave many more reasons and attributed their sickness to many more symptoms compared to baseline. The hope that diarrheal diseases might have been reduced during the MTE is not supported by the data; in fact, the opposite is true (increased from 1.5 to 31.2 percent of those children reporting sickness as a reason for absence in the past four weeks).¹³¹

224. UNICEF mentioned in its Past Performance Review for the next McGovern-Dole proposal that most schools do not have access to improved water points, which reduces the practice of handwashing with soap and using potable water for drinking and cooking. This is confirmed by the MTE findings and shows the importance of having an inventory of available infrastructure in all schools. This should include latrines, water points, storage facilities, kitchen conditions etc. Without sufficient sanitation facilities, including improved water points, the outcome of improving children’s health and contributing to reduced health-related school absence is unlikely to be achieved.

225. No particular positive or negative unintended results have come up to the evaluation team during the data collection phase.

2.6. SUSTAINABILITY

226. Through its capacity building activities, WFP continuously works towards sustainability. However, capacity building at the institution level can take up to three to five years before direct effects can be seen, and capacity building at the enabling environment level can take more than seven years.¹³² For example, it took three years for the decree recognising the NSFP to be adopted after the Policy was

¹³¹ See table 7 in Annex 21

¹³² WFP Policy on Capacity Development: An Update on Implementation (2009)

approved in 2016. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in most capacity building activities being suspended, further slowing down capacity building efforts. However, the CO confirmed that activities postponed in 2020 will be carried out in 2021. The ET does note that WFP CO has a good entry point at the government level regarding school feeding. The former Minister of Education has been promoted to Prime Minister after the last presidential election in May 2021. His promotion could favour school feeding projects in Congo given his background in education.

227. Considering the limited degree of involvement of the government in the school feeding activities, it is unrealistic to talk about transition to a national owned school meal project by the end of the McGovern-Dole project. While the ET recognises that WFP is continuously working with the Ministry of Education as well as with the NSFD towards the objective of sustainability, the goal of a nationally owned school feeding projects is still far away. Important factors outside capacity-building, such as political will and financial support, would also need to be addressed by the government to allow for a transition to national ownership.
228. Some progress has been made, particularly by strengthening the capacity of the DSF as explained in the effectiveness sub-section. The DSF still needs more capacity strengthening, not only on the national level, but also at the departmental level.
229. The communities targeted by WFP for the McGovern-Dole project are among the most vulnerable; often struggling to meet their basic needs. Asking them to contribute to school feeding activities can be problematic in low-resource settings. However, communities can provide low or non-cost support, such as volunteering as cooks or promoting family support of continued enrolment, can be a suitable avenue for supporting project objectives.
230. However, evaluation findings show that communities are not contributing as expected. Whilst firewood and water are provided by the community on a regular basis, it is not the case for vegetables and fruits which are of utmost importance to increasing dietary diversity. Further, expecting the community to provide cooks without remuneration is not realistic either, as people are looking for employment. Field visit interviews with cooks and school feeding committees revealed that people get demotivated due to lack of payment. Therefore, schools are forced to rotate the cooks rotate frequently as no one has the will nor the possibility to spend six or seven hours a day five days a week to work without payment. This demotivation echoes the findings of the joint mission report on gender done in July 2019 which found that beneficiaries also get demotivated because of the delay of payment in FFA projects (not funded by USDA).
231. The issue of cooks' payments is recurrent to several school feeding project and is directly linked to the gender and protection issues where food assistance should do no harm to the safety, dignity and integrity of the women, men, girls and boys receiving it, and is provided in ways that respect their rights.¹³³
232. Other factors that work against the sustainability of the McGovern-Dole project are that the importing of food from the United States of America for school feeding is not aligned with the objective of school feeding sustainability. It is clear that the WFP CO is totally convinced of the importance and potential of the HGSF modality of school canteens as per the pilot project WFP has been running in the Pool department. However, the project model still relies heavily on imported food from the United States of America.

133 WFP; WFP Gender Policy 2015-2020, 2015

6. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1. CONCLUSIONS

233. **Relevance:** The evaluation found that the McGovern-Dole project is relevant to the literacy and nutrition and health context of children in Congo. WFP has targeted areas with high levels of poverty, so implementing the project as originally designed could have contributed to addressing those needs. The project feeds children from poor households for whom the school meal is sometimes the only meal they receive throughout the day. School feeding therefore serves a food security purpose, acting as a social safety net for poor households.
234. However, the evaluation found that the model of using imported food is not coherent with the government's preference for home-grown food that uses locally produced food. As stated in the National School Feeding Policy,¹³⁴ the government's vision is to link school feeding to agriculture and local economy. Congo has vast swathes of uncultivated arable land, representing about one third of its total area. Using locally produced food would not only help the local economy but would also allow the project to gain independence from foreign food assistance. It is clear that WFP CO and many other stakeholders agree with this view. Over the past five years, WFP has had two different pilot projects based on HGSF in the Bouenza department. It is now in the hands of the donor community, USDA in this case, to allow humanitarian and development actors to work towards HGSF projects to ensure better impact and sustainability of school feeding projects.
235. **Effectiveness:** Since the launch of the project, some activities intended to improve literacy have not been implemented, because they have not been contracted to partners. The activities that have been implemented through the project by UNESCO and UNICEF have mostly been peripheral to the literacy objective and targeted outcomes of enrollment and school feeding, without sufficient attention to the objective of improving the quality of literacy instruction. Enrolment steadily increased up until the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in school closures. School feeding activities were partially implemented. However, the volume of food distributed for the school meals has been substantially less than planned, which meant the meals have not been provided every school day and/or the quantity provided to children was less than the recommended ration.
236. The evaluation also found mixed results from the activities implemented to support the increased use of health and dietary practices. WFP's involvement in nutrition activities has been limited by the lack of involvement of the CO nutritionist, and there is nobody in charge of coordinating gender, nutrition, and health at the Country Office.¹³⁵ This has led to insufficient coordination amongst the partners. There has also been no coordinated approach for the nutrition messages, especially with emphasis on dietary diversification. The curriculum developed for health and nutrition training was not tailored to the needs of primary schools, and the training approaches by UNESCO and UNICEF have not been coordinated, and the further roll out has not been budgeted for. Finally, data collection in schools show only minimal improvement in dietary diversity of school children.¹³⁶
237. There were positive results from the health-related activities, with UNICEF and ACTED both actively supporting the construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure, including kitchens, storerooms and latrines. However, the baseline recommendation to create a complete inventory of school infrastructure (latrines, water points, hand washing stations, storage and kitchen facilities) was not undertaken. This reduces the evaluation's ability to determine the full picture of infrastructure in McGovern-Dole supported schools. Distribution of fuel-efficient stoves has been done but they are in

134 Politique nationale d'alimentation scolaire, January 2016

135 The ET noted that the CO had recruited an international nutrition consultant who, with a separate TOR, was occasionally involved in McGovern-Dole operations. However, the main objective of this consultancy was not the coordination of the above-mentioned activities.

136 See tables 16a, 16b and 16 in Annex 21 (volume 2)

limited use because they were not able to cope with the large volumes of food required for school meals.

238. The evaluation identified mixed results in the mainstreaming of gender. Some positive results are noted, including increases in the percentage of women in leadership positions within the school feeding committees. However, the non-remuneration and high workload of predominantly female cooks is a persistent problem in school feeding operations. The remuneration of cooks is often raised as an issue in school feeding projects. Sometimes donors and/or development actors do not want to pay them, claiming that the community should be mobilised to promote the ownership and sustainability of school feeding projects. This rarely works, and many women find themselves working every morning at school and every afternoon in their fields. School feeding projects are the perfect opportunity to empower women and recognise their work for society by paying them appropriately for what they do.
239. UNICEF has started to include menstrual hygiene in the WASH training and considered this issue in latrine construction by ensuring the availability of disposal facilities for girls. This is an important step and needs to be systematically considered by all partners. Overall, there is a lack of gender disaggregated data across the project. This would be the first step in increasing gender sensitivity of all operations. The project also needs to be more proactive in incorporating transformative approaches. This includes rolling out the gender module, developed for primary schools.
240. Overall, determination of the effectiveness of the project was hampered by issues in the project monitoring data. The provided data does not provide a clear picture of the progress of some activities. WFP did not sufficiently define key indicators to accurately report in the SAPR. The ACR is inadequate to report on PMP indicators as indicators do not always match, and documents do not always use the same reporting month (fiscal year vs; calendar year). The ET has several other concerns about the monitoring of the project.
241. WFP's M&E of the project has been increased using a school feeding dashboard. Whilst the ET recognised the important potential of such a tool, the ET also see its limits when applied to a McGovern-Dole project. With further modification, the dashboard could be more effectively used as a monitoring and a programming tool.
242. **Efficiency:** Targeting of schools has been efficiently carried out through collaboration with the Ministry of Education. However, the efficiency of the project has been compromised by logistic challenges that resulted in delays in distributing food to schools. Cost efficiency calculations for the school feeding component are limited due to variations in data reporting year to year. Furthermore, community contributions, which vary by location, are not systematically captured to allow for adequate cost efficiency calculations. The ET could endeavour to calculate the cost per beneficiary of the school feeding activities pending harmonization of data and definition of school meal beneficiary.
243. Support from USDA through the McGovern-Dole project has enabled WFP to build national capacity in school feeding and allowed WFP to achieve its ambitions for school feeding in the country. WFP has managed to leverage USDA's support not only to implement the McGovern-Dole project but also to engage other partners in school feeding activities, secure additional funding and develop complementary activities directly linked to the McGovern-Dole project.
244. **Impact:** The MTE raises questions on the possibility of the project to achieve its objective of improving the literacy of school age children given limited progress and relevance of activities meant to improve the quality of literacy instruction (MGD 1.1). Results of the literacy test conducted for MTE reveals minimal differences concerning improvement in reading skills of students attending supported schools, this change is within the margin of error and thus not conclusive proof of impact.
245. On the health and nutrition objective, several of the activities are likely to positively affect the school environment and contribute to a more conducive learning environment for students. The outcome indicator for SO2 is reduced by health-related absence. Positively, the percentage of students reporting absence in the past four weeks decreased by over 30 percent between baseline and midline. However, the fact that the proportion of these students indicating health-related reasons for absence has increased considerably highlights continued health-related barriers to attendance.

Notably, students indicated diarrheal diseases were a primary reason for sickness-related illness at midline.

246. **Sustainability:** The ET recognises that WFP is continuously working with the Ministry of Education as well as with the NSFD towards the objective of sustainability. However, to date, WFP has had limited engagement, making it unrealistic to talk about transition to a national owned school meal project by the end of this phase of the McGovern-Dole project. Important factors outside capacity-building, such as political will and financial support, would also need to be addressed by the government to allow for a transition to national ownership. School- and community-level capacity to support the project is growing, but the WFP needs to be careful about asking communities to contribute too much to the project, since they were specifically targeted because they are poor and in need of assistance. It is therefore not sustainable to require major contributions from them.

3.2. LESSONS

247. It is a bit pre-mature to draw lessons during the mid-term evaluation. However, the ET would like to point out two main lessons that will certainly be further reflected on during the final report in 2022. Those lessons may have the potential for wider application and reflection for other McGovern-Dole projects implemented by WFP.
248. To reach SO1 of improvement of literacy of pupils, WFP should work beyond traditional areas of expertise. SO1 can only be achieved by close collaboration with partners. However, being the recipient of the McGovern-Dole funds, WFP is accountable towards this objective.
249. Certain aspects of McGovern-Dole projects are not coherent with WFP policies. Two areas of concern have been discussed throughout the report a) the fact that McGovern-Dole projects prioritise imported food whilst WFP's policy favours HGSF; b) while the McGovern-Dole program does encourage remuneration of cooks, the McGovern-Dole project in the Republic of Congo relies on volunteer cooks which does not align with WFP's policy on gender to promote the recognition for women's work.

3.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

250. The current McGovern-Dole project is coming to an end in September 2023. Realistically speaking, this leaves little time for WFP and its implementing partners to proceed with in-depth changes. However, those recommendations could help improve project implementation and monitoring if it was to continue under a new McGovern-Dole agreement funding from 2022 until 2027. The ET proposes three operational recommendations, three strategic recommendations and one additional recommendation not directly related to this MTE but that should be taken into consideration for the final evaluation.

Recommendation	Type	Who	Priority	When
<p>Recommendation 1. WFP should work with schools and implementing partners to clearly define standards for monitoring of the McGovern-Dole project so that implementation progress can be better established, and the effectiveness of the project better evaluated. USDA has a specific monitoring system that differs from WFP’s standard ACR monitoring indicators. The PMP should be considered as the main M&E tool to follow the implementation of the McGovern-Dole project, together with the narrative report.</p> <p>Partners would benefit from harmonized template for reporting on indicators, including required disaggregation for gender. This would allow WFP to follow the PMP with accuracy in the semi-annual performance reports. Indicators need to be specific enough for the reader to understand what they stand for. All indicator data needs to be inserted in the ITT in the SAPR by WFP staff even if WFP is not the direct implementing actor of the activity the indicator relates to.</p> <p>The dashboard developed by WFP and the process monitoring could be updated to collect information more relevant to the specificities of the McGovern-Dole project, which goes beyond a classic school feeding project.</p>				
1. The RB should ensure that the WFP Congo, and especially the school feeding officer and M&E officer, are well acquainted with the specificity of McGovern-Dole PMP indicators.	Operational	WFP RB	High	Next 3 months
2. WFP Congo should thoroughly go through each PMP indicator and consider how it can report on it. Indicators should be presented explicitly enough to be understood by people that may not be very familiar with the project.		WFP CO with the support of the RB	High	Before the end on the project.
3. USDA SAPR ITTs need to be established with more quality and rigor.		WFP CO with the support of the RB	Medium	Next SAPR
4. WFP needs to be able to provide SAPR ITTs that are complete.		WFP CO with the support of the RB	High	Before the end of the project
5. Standard Indicator # 15 on the number of daily school meals provided should be considered with more accuracy, as it is the indicator that best defines WFP’s results in terms of food distribution. This number should not be calculated using the average monthly number of children having benefited from school meals multiplied by the number of school days over the reporting period. This number should come directly from the school canteens registries looking at the quantity of food coming out of the stock each day.		WFP CO	Medium	Before the end of the project
6. The dashboard should be further developed for it to better inform PMP indicators.		WFP CO	High	Next 4 months

Recommendation	Type	Who	Priority	When
<p>Recommendation 2: WFP Congo should ensure that there is a complete infrastructure inventory of all McGovern-Dole assisted schools before the end of the project. This will allow realistic planning of all necessary infrastructure components that are needed to assure a healthy environment at the school premises. At this stage of the project, this activity will be important to prepare for a potential second phase of the McGovern-Dole project starting in July 2022. WFP should work with all implementing partners (ACTED, UNICEF and NSFD) on this inventory.</p>	Operational	WFP CO	High	Before the end of the project
<p>Recommendation 3: WFP Congo with support from RBJ should develop clear guidance on curriculum promoting dietary diversity. This includes defining the concept of food groups as an indicator for dietary adequacy. There is need to establish a working group which will put dietary diversity at the centre of its discussions. This recommendation implies that WFP will have a nutritionist at CO level who is the focal point for all McGovern-Dole related activities. This has been absent during the current McGovern-Dole project and has resulted in a lack of coordination between all implementing partners.</p>				
The position of nutritionist needs to be considered when preparing for the current application for a second phase.	Operational	WFP CO and RBJ	High	Part of the application process
<p>Recommendation 4: Regarding the McGovern-Dole project in Congo, WFP should ensure that an action plan is developed to ensure that the project contributes to the objective of improving the quality of literacy education for school-age children. So late in the project implementation, it is unrealistic to ask WFP to start implementing activities for curriculum development and training. However, given that the CO is planning to apply for a second round of USDA McGovern-Dole funding, the CO should be ready to properly engage in this direction. During proposal development, it is recommended that WFP include activities that specifically focus on improving the literacy of school-age children. At this stage, this is therefore a strategic recommendation rather than operational.</p>				
1. With the support of the RBJ, the WFP CO in Congo should organise a meeting with key education stakeholders to ensure that school children benefit from improved literacy capacities for the next McGovern-Dole.	Strategic	WFP RBJ & CO	High	Before the end of the project
2. For the design of the next McGovern-Dole proposal, WFP and its literacy partners should revise partnership agreements to refocus activities on improving literacy of school age children.		WFP CO	High	Before the end of the project
<p>Recommendation 5: USDA should discuss with WFP RBJ, with the support of WFP HQ as necessary, the most appropriate ways to support school feeding in the region, with an emphasis on the growing interest in the home-grown school feeding model, which transfers cash to schools for local food purchase. To sustain school feeding in the region, it will eventually be necessary to transition from McGovern-Dole projects to the government's preferred models and better support economic development. Incorporating the pilot projects of cassava fortification and Mbala Pinda to all McGovern-Dole schools could be considered.</p>				

Recommendation	Type	Who	Priority	When
WFP must work closely with USDA to determine how best to support countries to transition their McGovern-Dole project to the government preferred model.	Strategic	USDA	High	Next 12 months
Recommendation 6: WFP should give more emphasis on women's empowerment and gender sensitisation. School feeding projects are a perfect opportunity to promote women's empowerment and recognise their work in society by paying them for their work. Regarding gender sensitisation, WFP Congo with support from RBJ, UNICEF and other partners as appropriate, should ensure that gender transformative approaches are an integral part of the primary school curriculum using the already developed module by the Ministry of Women.				
1. The RBJ together with the CO should take a clear stand regarding their positioning on how the payment (excluding payment by the community) or non-payment of cooks agrees with their overall GEWE policy.	Strategic	WFP CO, RBJ	High	This task needs to be done in preparation for a potential second McGovern-Dole project phase.
2. If WFP CO and RBJ are willing to promote GEWE by paying school cooks, determine the best ways of proceeding with other actors, taking the national context into consideration.		WFP CO, RBJ	High	
3. Approach donors willing to promote GEWE interventions in Congo		WFP CO	High	
4. In collaboration with the respective ministries, WFP should review existing gender modules to determine if they are appropriate to integrate into the school curriculum.		WFP CO	Medium	

7. Acronyms

ACR	Annual Country Report
CO	Country Office
CONFEMEN	Conference of Ministers of Education of French-Speaking Countries
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DAS	Direction de l'alimentation scolaire
DDS	Dietary Diversity Score
DEP	Directeur de l'enseignement primaire
DHS	Demographic and health survey
DID	Difference in difference
DSF	Directorate of School Feeding
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FFA	Food For Assets
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEEW	Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
GPE	Global Partnership in Education
HGSF	Home Grown School Feeding
HQ	Headquarters
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INRAP	Institut National de Recherche et d'Actions Pédagogiques

INS	Institut National de la Statistique
KII	Key informant interviews
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEPPSA	Ministère de l'Enseignement préscolaire, primaire, secondaire et de l'Alphabétisation
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MT	Metric tonnes
MTE	Mid-term Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRI	Natural Resources Institute
NSFD	National School Feeding Directorate
NSFP	National School Feeding Policy
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OEV	Office of Evaluation
PASEC	<i>Project d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN</i>
PDN	National Development Plan
PEDD	<i>Project éducative du développement durable</i>
PHDI	Planetary pressure-adjusted Human Development Index
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PRAASED	<i>Projet d'Appui à l'Amélioration du Système Éducatif</i>
PSEA	Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RBJ	(WFP) Regional Bureau Johannesburg
RF	Results Framework
SABER	Systems Assessment for Better Education Results
SAPR	Semi-Annual Performance Report
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

SFC	School Feeding Committee
SFS	School Feeding Services (<i>Services d'alimentation scolaire</i>)
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SO	Strategic Objective
SPR	Standard Project Report
SY	School Year
THR	Take Home Ration
ToC	Theory of Change
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Project
WHO	World Health Organization

WFP Republic of Congo

World Food Programme

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