



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Zambia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023

CONTEXT

Zambia is a large landlocked country with an estimated population of 19.5 million which is among the world's youngest. The economy grew steadily since the 1990s and had reached lower middle-income status in 2011, but a deepening economic crisis caused by dwindling copper prices finally resulted in its reclassification as a low-income country in 2022. Zambia is facing widespread undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and worsening overnutrition, with widening inequality. The latest demographic and health survey (2018) showed that 35 percent of children under 5 were stunted, 12 percent were underweight and 58 percent were anemic.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The Zambia CSP envisioned a strategic shift from direct food assistance to supporting Government's capacity to respond to the high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition through policy and system development and training of Government staff and vulnerable communities, while continuing to address Government requests for emergency response. The CSP was approved in June 2019 for the amount of USD 76.2 million and 175,000 direct beneficiaries. However, due to drought and Covid 19, the CSP was revised upwards to USD 142 million and nearly 2 million beneficiaries by September 2020. As impacts of drought and Covid subsided during 2021, the needs were progressively revised down to 513,000 beneficiaries by July 2022. As of July 2022, the CSP was 41 percent funded.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by WFP independent Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next CSP in Zambia. It covers WFP activities implemented between 2019 and 2022 to assess results and the extent to which WFP Zambia was able to implement the intended

strategic shift. The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Zambia Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Zambia, and other stakeholders in the country.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities and people's needs as well as WFP's strengths?

The CSP was designed in consultation with Government and UN partners according to needs identified in the Zero Hunger Strategic Review; the 7th National Development Plan; and Vision 2030, as well as national policies on agriculture, food and nutrition and social protection. The CSP was designed to maximise synergies and complementarities with UN agencies based on WFP's strengths and comparative advantages, most notably with UNHCR for the refugee response, UNICEF and ILO for the COVID-19 emergency response in urban areas and IFAD and FAO for resilience building among smallholder farmers. However, the evaluation found little evidence of coordination with the traditional actors in the area of social protection such as UNICEF and the World Bank. WFP's strategic position as the preferred agency for food security and emergency response remained strong during the CSP.

WFP's specific contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in Zambia?

WFP reached its beneficiary targets for the emergency operations, but funding shortfalls resulted in ration cuts for the drought and the refugee operation reducing the nutritional outcome. The handover of the Homegrown School Meal programme to the Government was a success story in the area of social protection. WFP supported strategy development and training, and the Government allocated resources to expand from 38 to 70 districts,

helping create a more nutritious diet for close to two million school children. WFP improved resilience and access to markets for smallholder farmers through training that increased agricultural yields and the sale of surplus production. Nutritional practice was improved through Social and Behavioral Communication Campaigns and

support to planning at district level resulted in improved nutrition for babies through the 1000 days programme. However, the scale of the results across the CSP, was affected by a slow upstart of activities in 2019, funding shortfalls, and delays and cancellations due to Covid 19.

WFP contributed to Gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly for female smallholders through increased agricultural yield and income. WFP implemented the CSP adhering to the humanitarian principles, protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and accountability to affected populations (AAP) through appropriate information sharing. There are still challenges ensuring environmental sustainability of the interventions.

Efficient use of resources

The CSP experienced slow execution from approval in July 2019 when focus was on planning of new interventions. WFP's COVID-19 response was timely, with emergency cash transfers launched in WFP-targeted districts by July 2020. However, the drought response and some resilience building and capacity strengthening suffered delays, due to late availability of funding and long lead time for international and regional procurement, as well as COVID-19 related restrictions. The evaluation found that WFPs targeting at household level was appropriate, but the geographical targeting missed nutritionally vulnerable and under-served v people in northern and western provinces. The almost total change from food assistance to cash-based transfers significantly reduced transaction costs.

Key factors explaining performance

Among the key factors that enabled WFP performance were strong relations with Government at central and district levels, a conducive policy environment, appropriate partnerships, and adequate human resources. Constraining factors included low levels of international funding, given competing global priorities and Zambia's classification as a lower middle-income country until recently. The deepening economic crisis in Zambia also affected public funding. Finally, the disrupting effects of the droughts and COVID-19 caused delays in implementation of CCS and resilience building, somewhat interrupting the envisioned strategic shift.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The evaluation concludes that WFP was able to position itself strategically in Zambia and demonstrated its capacity to scale up to respond to droughts and Covid 19, although this limited the intended strategic shift away from direct food assistance. The CSP was aligned with national policies and relevant UN plans in the country and was based on WFP comparative advantages. Strong partnerships with government institutions, UN partners and private sector

enhanced WFP's contributions to outcomes. Effectiveness was high in the Covid 19 response, less so in the drought and refugee operation due to delays and funding shortfalls. In spite of some underfunding and under-execution across the SOs, important results were achieved in resilience of Small Holder Farmers and the Government's successful takeover and expansion of the Homegrown School Meals programme. While targeting at community and household level was appropriate, geographical targeting excluded some highly food insecure provinces. Commitments on cross cutting issues were generally fulfilled except for environmental sustainability of the refugee operation and the Homegrown School Meals.

Recommendations

1. Reconsider geographical targeting to include most food insecure areas
2. Expand the nutrition portfolio by strengthening local coordination structures and advocate for the Food and Nutrition Gap analysis to inform the nutrition policy
3. Strengthen engagement in social protection in partnership with Unicef and the World Bank
4. Increase attention to crosscutting issues, particularly environmental sustainability.
5. Increase advocacy for funding for refugees in partnership with UNHCR
6. Continue to develop resilience for small holder farmers through CCS and stimulate private sector networks