



WFP EVALUATION

Baseline: Evaluation of Ethiopia Food for Education And Child Nutrition Programme 2019-2024

CONTEXT

The Ethiopian government has a growing commitment to school feeding, and has collaborated with WFP over many years. The project focuses on pastoral areas which have a history of food insecurity and educational disadvantage. A previous McGovern-Dole project supported Afar and Somali Regions up to 2017.

The Covid-19 pandemic took hold shortly after the project was agreed. It led to school closures for most of 2020, and school feeding was not launched until early 2021, entailing delay to the baseline survey. In addition, 2 Internal conflicts in Ethiopia caused additional disruption.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The World Food Programme (WFP) in Ethiopia is implementing a five-year school feeding project funded by the McGovern-Dole programme of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The project, with a total budget of USD 28 million, focuses on Afar Region and two Zones of Oromia Region (Borana and East Hararghe). The project is to provide school meals for primary schools and also for pre-primary children on the same sites. The project's initial targets were to feed 200,000 children from 450 schools in Year 1, tapering down to 134,500 children from 348 schools in Year 5. During implementation, the number of schools recruited has grown to over 800, although beneficiary numbers have not increased. In Afar, take-home rations (THR) will be provided for girls in grades 5 and 6 and boys in Grade 6. Various support activities will promote literacy, health, nutrition, and capacity strengthening.

The project was originally due to commence in 2019 but commencement of school feeding was delayed by school closures on account of the Covid-19 pandemic and there were consequential delays to the baseline evaluation.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

This baseline of the decentralized evaluation was commissioned by the WFP Ethiopia Country Office to provide a situation analysis at the start of activities and was intended for both accountability and learning purposes. The baseline assessment of the evaluation should enable the endline to robustly assess the project's achievements. The evaluations are also required to pay special attention to gender analysis. The endline evaluation in 2024 will include a follow-up to the baseline survey as part of an evidence-based, performance assessment for accountability and learning.

The report's primary users, alongside the evaluation team, are stakeholders directly involved in programme implementation. These include WFP Ethiopia and its main implementing partner, Ethiopia's federal Ministry of Education, together with Regional Education Bureaus for Afar and Oromia Regions. USDA has a direct interest, as do WFP's headquarters, its Regional Bureau in Nairobi, and other organisations on the evaluation reference group.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

[Baseline findings strongly support the programme's relevance]

The evaluation found that the programme is relevant to the needs of the target areas, schools, right beneficiaries, with the right mix of assistance in terms of their poverty, their food, the poor quality of education services, and low levels of educational attainment. Baseline survey findings provide good evidence that the school meal is an effective incentive as a safety net for food insecure families in the Afar and Oromia contexts. In addition, the programme has strong gender relevance including special attention to disability and inclusion.

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the management response are available at <http://www.wfp.org/independent-evaluation> For more information please contact the Office of Evaluation wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org

The evaluation supports that programme is designed to work through government systems. The programme also aligns with national systems and has strong coherence between government and donor policies.

[Results of the programme]

As baseline evaluation, it is too soon for judgments on project-specific outcomes. The roll-out of school feeding was delayed in both Afar and Oromia, but the logistical difficulties in Afar appear greater, with a much lower proportion of schools already serving school meals at the time of the survey. However, flexibility in the school feeding menu, and ad hoc use of THR were sensible adaptations that avoided waste but also can be judged to have had substantial benefits for food insecure households experiencing the added stress of the pandemic.

[Factors likely to affect results]

The evaluation found that the pandemic and effects of internal conflict on supply lines mainly affected efficiency, especially for the timeliness of commencing the school feeding operation. However, USDA and WFP have acted flexibly to mitigate problems so that school feeding could be rolled out once the schools reopened and made other adjustments to forestall food losses.

Difficulties in establishing programme monitoring are understandable, but concerns about the quality of data being reported so far were raised. WFP needs to take action to strengthen monitoring of 15 of the 20 McGovern-Dole key indicators.

[Sustainability]

Current challenges to the theory of change assumptions must have implications for sustainability, and support for and commitment to school feeding remains evident at all levels of government and in communities. Implementation of the complementary components of the McGovern-Dole project is still nascent and will be a subject for review in the MTR and the final evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

Overall Assessment

The baseline of the evaluation provided a firm foundation for the overall evaluation by its situation analysis, baseline values, validation of evaluation methodology, the confirmation of the availability of evidence.

The project is designed aligning with right areas, schools, and beneficiaries as well as national systems. Although the pandemic and effects of internal conflict on supply lines mainly affected efficiency, USDA and WFP have mitigated issues by flexibly taking actions. Project outcomes and sustainability will be monitored and assessed.

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Lessons

The evaluation framework is designed to seek lessons for the USDA learning agenda, particularly about community involvement in school feeding, and potential for combining international food aid with local procurement. The MTR should explore these topics and also take stock of lessons from adaptation to the pandemic.

Lessons 1. Indicators and operational framework

Many baseline indicators and monitoring and reporting associated annual targets need revision. Formulation of several components should reflect the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey (KAPS). Therefore, during the first half of 2022 WFP, collaborating with government agencies, and consulting with USDA, should undertake systematic reprogramming to establish a revised and updated budgetary and operational framework for the project's remaining years.

Lessons 2. Lessons from the gender analysis

WFP should integrate into the programme the further gender insights that should emerge from WFP's analysis of the KAPS. In view of the various issues concerning girls' attendance in particular, WFP should collaborate with others to address identified gaps and ensure strengthened monitoring of girls' and boys' school attendance. Also, school feeding could be improved by ensuring adequate non-food items, so that children do not have to take turns to eat (to the possible disadvantage of girls).

Lessons 3. Lessons for the MTR

The MTR should be held before the 2021/22 school year ends. Topics for special attention include the project monitoring and reporting system, lessons from adaptations to Covid19, food safety, implementation of the THR component, links to local procurement, and community roles in supporting school feeding.

Lessons 4. Lessons for the endline evaluation

A good endline strategy will involve retaining some schools as a longitudinal sample, but with half selected afresh. The survey instrument should be streamlined if possible. The problems experienced in hosting the survey data on the WFP server should be avoided. The endline's survey should precede its qualitative work, so that survey findings can guide subsequent enquiries.