



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Philippines WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2023

CONTEXT

The Philippines is a middle-income country with a population of 111 million and an estimated Gross National Income (GNI) per capita equal to 3,555 USDs in 2020, making it one of the fastest growing emerging markets. The country is organized into 17 administrative regions and one autonomous region: the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The 2022 Global Hunger Index (GHI), identifies the Philippines as country with a 'moderate' level of hunger, ranking 69th out of 121 countries. The BARMM reports highest rates of malnutrition in the country. According to the latest available data at the time of the evaluation, stunting (45.2 percent of children under 5) and wasting (8.2 percent) are much higher than national levels (27 percent and 5.5 percent respectively). The Philippines is particularly sensitive to natural disasters, ranking as the most at-risk country in the world to natural hazards and climate change.

SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The CSP envisioned a transition from direct food assistance to support to national systems, by providing technical assistance in emergency preparedness and response, as well as in food security and nutrition through four strategic outcomes:

SO1	Affected populations meet food and nutrition needs during and after emergencies
SO2	Adequate and healthy diets for women, boys and girls in Provinces prioritized by Government
SO3	Improved food security and nutrition in Mindanao by 2022 in line with Government targets
SO4	National and local Governments have enhanced capabilities to reduce vulnerability to shocks by 2022.

However, the protracted humanitarian crisis in Lanao del Sur in 2017, natural disasters (typhoon Mangkhut in 2018, Typhoon Rai in December 2021) and the COVID-19 pandemic led to an unexpected increase in the budget for crisis response. This brought the original Needs Based Plan from USD 33 million in 2018 to a total of USD 94 million at the end of 2022.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE 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 the Philippines. It covers WFPs activities implemented between 2018 and 2022 to assess the performance of the CSP and the extent to which it promoted the strategic shift envisioned for the CSP approach. The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Philippines Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Philippines, and other stakeholders in the country.

KEY 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 design was predicated on the Philippines National Development Plan 2017-2022 and other central national policies related to food security and nutrition. The focus on peacebuilding in the BARMM region was appropriately reflected as a crucial priority for the Government. The CSP was aligned with the United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development in the Philippines and sought WFP partnerships based on its comparative advantage in the country, for example its subnational presence, particularly in BARMM; its proven capacities in logistics, assessments, emergency response, supply chain and food security policy analysis; and its convening/coordination power.

WFP was strategically positioned across the nexus and the CSP's programme logic is clearly visible in design. However, limited synergies among Strategic Objectives (SOs) reduced internal coherence and in some cases impeded effectiveness. For example, social protection was spread over 3 SOs and lacked a coherent implementation strategy, and the CSP did not maximise opportunities for mainstreaming nutrition across SOs. WFP strategic positioning responded to changes in the context and in national needs, but Country Capacity Strengthening contributions lacked an over-arching strategic framework and did not apply corporate Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) frameworks and tools.

Extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes

WFP significantly contributed to outcomes in humanitarian

response, emergency preparedness and response (EPR) under SO1 and SO4, and peacebuilding engagement under SO3, but less so in relation to improved diets (SO2) and social protection (SO4). Food or cash distribution under SO1 contributed effectively to food security outcomes, evidenced by improved food consumption scores in WFP-assisted areas compared to national scores. Furthermore, WFP strengthened Government's emergency response capacity with logistics and supply chain management under SO4, and strengthened communications in EPR systems and information management. However, the scale of results was limited by funding shortfalls in the first half of the CSP, while the CSP architecture posed challenges for pivoting to direct response when needed.

Ambitious implementation aspirations to support government policy and programming by enhancing diets under SO2 were curtailed in scope by resourcing shortfalls, except for in BARMM. The geographic-based multi-sectoral intervention approach in BARMM under SO 3 contributed to strengthened policy frameworks and plans, and enhanced local government capacities. It successfully increased coherence among government ministries and contributed to peacebuilding, although this is not well captured in WFPs current reporting format.

WFP performed well on cross-cutting issues including gender, reaching its targets for women's participation in project committees, women's household decision-making, and control over resources. However fewer women participated in BARMM due to the pandemic, which forced women to take on an expanded household role and constrained their time availability. WFP complied with guidelines on protection except in the Typhoon Rai response when capacity was stretched. On the other hand, WFP improved its performance against targets for Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). Environmental considerations were prominently integrated into SO3 and SO4, but there was limited integration of environmental risk assessments under SO1. WFP contributed positively to the nexus, and particularly to peacebuilding in BARMM, though the food security entry point sometimes masked the relevance of WFP actions to development or peacebuilding priorities.

Efficient use of resources

Timeliness varied across the CSP, but cash transfers were timelier than in kind contributions. Capacity strengthening activities were the timeliest interventions. Some inefficiencies arose regarding the scale up in response to Typhoon Rai in December 2021, due to lack of maintenance of the response capacity in the country office. However, WFP's timely provision of trucks, needs assessment capacity and other data support strengthened the Government's own response and was perceived as successful by local stakeholders. The cost of delivering the CSP was consistent and appropriate for a capacity strengthening oriented CSP, with no evident internal operational inefficiencies. By 2020, WFP had stopped all in kind distribution, but it was reintroduced in the response to Typhoon Rai due to donor requirements and a concern for market disruption.

WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan

The human and financial resources situation shows two different phases within the CSP. During 2018-2020, WFP had limited funding, vacant senior management positions and high staff turnover, which did not facilitate the CSP's intended strategic shift. From 2021, strategic partnerships are being strengthened, giving greater scope for the intended shift to occur. The corporate intention to attract flexible, multi-year funding that would increase WFP's capacity to adapt to emerging opportunities and align programming with Government priorities was not realised in the Philippines, where over 62 percent of

funding was earmarked to the activity level and mostly for humanitarian response. The distribution of resourcing affected CSP performance, with Country Capacity Strengthening under SOs 2 and 4 receiving very limited funding, forcing changes in scope from the original design.

Although WFP improved monitoring systems to demonstrate progress towards outcomes and inform programming choices, gaps in outcome indicators limit the opportunities to demonstrate high-level long-term CCS or peacebuilding contributions, as well as constraining scope for learning and adaptation.

Vacant senior management posts hindered strategic partnerships until 2021. However, at the subnational level, there are strong strategic, technical, and operational partnerships in BARMM. These could serve as examples for other regions, where the quality of partnerships currently is weaker due to episodic engagement. Private sector partnerships are a priority and represent high potential for the CSP but there are challenges to coherent and strategic coordination.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall Assessment

The CSP is well aligned with government priorities and WFP is well positioned across the entire nexus, although strongest in humanitarian assistance, emergency preparedness and response, and peacebuilding. The results within CCS reflect a 'two-phase' period within the CSP. An initial period characterized by vacant senior management positions, resource constraints, high staff turnover, and pandemic disruption resulted in limited results, particularly for CCS. From 2021, the CSP moved into a period of improved resourcing and staffing which led to a re-expansion of CSP scope and re-established strategic relationships with Government and improved results. Cost efficiency was generally high throughout the period under review.

Using food security and nutrition as entry point limited WFPs inclusion in conversations around peacebuilding and social protection. The CSP did not attract more flexible funding as corporately envisioned. On the contrary, the funding was largely earmarked and donors' continued perception of WFP as primarily an emergency response agency in the Philippines impeded funding for a primarily CCS-focused CSP.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes six recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Use the corporate CCS and Corporate Results Framework instruments to develop a country specific CCS strategy, approach, roadmap, and monitoring framework to guide Country Office interventions, including in nutrition-sensitive social protection

Recommendation 2. Ensure a coherent strategy in social protection while continuing to expand its strategic positioning

Recommendation 3. Maintain Country Office internal capacity to scale up in case of a required emergency response

Recommendation 4. Explore the expansion of WFP subnational engagement in country capacity strengthening particularly within emergency preparedness and response

Recommendation 5. Refine and diversify the financial and human resources to respond to WFP's agenda of saving lives and changing lives

Recommendation 6. Invest further in knowledge management to contribute to programme decision making and strengthen institutional memory.