



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Namibia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2017-2023

CONTEXT

Located on the Atlantic coast of Southwest Africa, Namibia is the driest country in the region with a population of 2.3 million. It is classified as an upper middle-income country with a Gross Domestic Product per capita of USD 4,729.4. According to the national Statistics Agency, the Gini coefficient is 0.576, making Namibia one of the most unequal economies in the world. In the 2021 Global Hunger Index (GHI), Namibia ranks 78th out of 120 countries. With a score of 18.7, Namibia has a level of hunger that is considered 'moderate'. According to the latest data available (2013), the prevalence of stunting and wasting was relatively high, reaching respectively 22.7 percent and 5.3 percent. The combination of limited agricultural production and high vulnerability to shocks and climate change are among the drivers of the food insecurity.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The first Namibia CSP 2017-2022 was approved by WFP EB in June 2017 for a total value of USD 6 million. It was designed to contribute to SDGs 2, 4 and 17 and to WFP Strategic Results 1 (access to food), 4 (sustainable food systems), 5 (capacity strengthening) and 6 (global partnerships). The original CSP had two strategic outcomes (SOs) and four activities focused on Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) and evidence creation within the area of food security and nutrition. As of July 2022, the CSP had expanded to five SOs and eight activities, six focused on capacity strengthening and two accommodating direct emergency response to severe drought conditions and support to development of food systems. The total cost of the CSP is now USD 46 million and it is 49% funded. The Government of Namibia is WFP's main partner.

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 Namibia. It covers WFP activities implemented between 2019 and 2022 to assess results and the extent to which WFP Namibia was able to implement the strategic shift intended by the CSP. The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Namibia Country

Office, the Regional Bureau for Southern Africa, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Namibia, 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 to respond to institutional needs with regards to policy frameworks, capacity, monitoring and evaluation; as well as fragmented social programmes and weak coordination in the area of food security and nutrition. WFP is strategically well positioned given its comparative advantage such as school feeding, disaster risk management, food and nutrition security and social protection. WFP appropriately adjusted to respond to contextual changes and external shocks, including to food assistance needs arising from droughts and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also, WFP adapted its approach to country capacity strengthening, away from upstream policy work to downstream interventions such as the implementation of food systems demonstration pilots and digitalization of national social protection systems on the request of the Government.

WFP's specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes

Social safety nets

WFP support has contributed to building Government capacity and to developing the policy framework around social safety nets. WFP also conducted pilots for managing social protection programmes. Although some of these pilots did not achieve the foreseen objectives, they served to encourage the government to develop digital solutions to address challenges with registration of participants in social safety net programmes with the assistance of WFP.

School Feeding

WFP provided support to strengthen the policy environment, enhance information management, generate evidence, and support the roll out of a pilot Home Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Programme. However, needs assessments did not include a comprehensive analysis of national budget constraints or procurement processes, which consequently undermined the viability of the HGSF pilots and the effectiveness of WFPs interventions.

Food Security, nutrition and food systems

WFP support helped Government to develop a strong policy framework for food security and nutrition. WFP was also instrumental in integrating a food systems approach in Government policies. However, the pilots of food system projects only started implementation recently and although it is too early to expect results, the evaluation identified a number of design weaknesses and monitoring gaps, with potential to impede effectiveness.

Disaster Risk Management (DRM) and shock response

WFP's response to external shocks (drought and Covid 19) was mostly effective. WFP provided key support to DRM through the development of the National Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Framework and Action Plan, and the Awareness and Communication Strategy. However, they were not subsequently adopted due to competing political priorities. WFP support has been effective at building government capacity in supply chain related dimensions of shock response, assessing and monitoring vulnerabilities in the context of early warning systems.

Cross cutting issues

WFP supported Government in mainstreaming gender in the Food and Nutrition Security Policy and promoted the participation of women in decision-making in WFP interventions. However, competing priorities and limited internal capacity constrained systematic gender mainstreaming in the CSP. This was also true for other cross cutting issues such as protection and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), Accountability Affected Populations and environmental considerations.

The sustainability of upstream CCS activities is potentially high at the policy and institutional level, but it is inherently dependent on external factors such as government funding and priorities. Sustainability of downstream activities, including pilots are in some cases fragile due to design weaknesses and gaps in evidence generation and handover strategies.

Efficient use of resources

Most emergency response as well as some food systems projects experienced delays, reducing the efficiency of the assistance. In 2019, for example, a combination of late funding, limited WFP response capacity and lengthy procurement processes due to Covid-19, resulted in a five-month delay, with drought victims consequently missing the lean season. Targeting and coverage of WFP activities is not well documented, but data available indicated appropriate targeting of vulnerable locations and groups.

Although data is limited, it is evident that CBT is a more cost-efficient modality than food distribution in Namibia. However,

the geographical dispersion of WFP interventions contribute to high implementation and transactional costs.

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

The CSP was 49 percent funded as of October 2022. However, funding distribution across the CSP's duration was unequal, with 2020 being almost fully funded for the drought and Covid 19 responses, and the remaining years receiving much lower funding levels for capacity strengthening interventions. Although WFP has actively pursued funding opportunities, resourcing has been unpredictable and heavily earmarked at activity level.

WFP's strategic shift to capacity strengthening in support of government partners was further constrained by internal factors including : i) lack of clear articulation of how activities contribute to broader objectives; ii) inconsistent attention to a number of design, implementation and monitoring elements and iii) lack of coherence between staffing profiles and skills with intervention needs. Externally, funding constraints, and recent public spending and recruitment caps have also impeded the intended shift.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

The evaluation found that overall, the CSP remained relevant and aligned to government priorities throughout the period under review and facilitated strategic thinking about partnerships and funding opportunities in a challenging funding environment. The CSP has delivered some significant benefits for the Government of Namibia, and ultimately affected populations, by contributing to building government capacity to developing the policy framework around food security and nutrition, social safety nets and Disaster Risk Management. WFP was also instrumental in integrating a food systems approach in government policies and piloted interventions to demonstrate them in practice. Besides external factors, which are beyond the control of WFP, the performance was affected by a combination of internal factors related to limited financial and human resources, intervention design, M&E, and knowledge management, which affected the achievement of expected outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1.

Enhance strategic planning, activity design, and project implementation including internal and external capacity needs assessments particularly for key CCS areas.

Recommendation 2.

Strengthen knowledge management and M&E systems and ensure that the evidence generated contributes to improving activity design and facilitates the linkage with CCS objectives.

Recommendation 3.

Continue building partnerships in a strategic way that maximizes their contributions to the CSP and broader strategic goals including the development of a partnership and a resource mobilisation strategy

Recommendation 4.

Improve integration of cross-cutting issues in intervention design, planning and implementation