



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Ghana WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019 - 2023

CONTEXT

Ghana is a lower-middle income country with a population of 30.8 million, faced with economic fluctuations, including a significant decline in GDP growth since 2020; two-decade high inflation rates, and food prices experiencing a 59.3 percent inflation in the final quarter of 2022. The number of individuals living in poverty has risen due to population growth, particularly in northern Ghana.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The 2018 Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) focused on improving nutrition and on strengthening food systems and social protection programs for children, women, and people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV). The subsequent Country Strategic Plan (CSP) (2019-2023) continued these activities, with the exception of PLHIV support, and expanded Country Capacity Strengthening (CCS) efforts to include food security monitoring and disaster preparedness. In May 2020 the CSP was revised in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and an anticipated refugee influx, incorporating a crisis response outcome through budget revision 1 (BR01). The T-ICSP, with a needs-based plan of USD 11.5 million, targeted 193,000 beneficiaries during its 12-month duration, while the CSP budget of USD 72 million over five years aimed to reach 225,000 beneficiaries. BR01 in May 2020 increased the CSP budget and beneficiaries to USD 94 million and 325,000. The T-ICSP achieved a funding level of 93%, while allocated resources for the CSP amounted to 32% of the total budget by October 2022.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the independent Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next WFP CSP in Ghana. It covers WFP activities implemented between 2018 and September 2022.

The evaluation assessed WFP's strategic positioning and role and the extent to which WFP has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP; WFP's contributions to strategic outcomes; efficiency and factors that explain WFP performance. The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Ghana Country Office, the Regional Bureau

for Western Africa, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Ghana 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

Both, the T-ICSP and the subsequent CSP for Ghana were highly relevant and aligned with the country's national development priorities and the Ghana UN Sustainable Development Partnership framework 2018-2022. The CSP demonstrated an evidence-based approach, addressing the food security and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations. The T-ICSP and CSP were implemented in a stable environment, with no major changes in context, national capacities or needs of targeted populations until 2020. At that point, WFP demonstrated flexibility and agility by promptly adjusting the CSP in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

WFP is positioned in Ghana as a key actor in delivering food security and nutrition interventions to vulnerable populations, and as a trusted partner in providing evidence on the food security and nutrition situation in the country. It is also gaining recognition for its ability to strengthen social protection programmes and emergency preparedness and response capacity. The CSP design displayed internal coherence, with interconnected activities contributing to various outcomes. However, the inter-linkage between downstream (community level) and upstream activities was not well articulated.

Extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes in Ghana

Under Strategic Outcome (SO) 1 (Nutrition), WFP contributed to improved antiretroviral therapy adherence and nutritional recovery among PLHIV, but coverage was limited. Take-home rations for adolescent girls improved school attendance rates, but enrolment rates reduced and the overall effect on education outcomes was minimal due to low coverage. Although the CSP contributed to improved food consumption among women and young children, difficulties were encountered in reaching intended beneficiaries and delays occurred in the registration and verification process. Social and Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) interventions aimed at generating demand for nutritious food, reached the majority of target groups.

Strategic Outcome 2 (Food systems) aimed to enhance the production of high-quality and nutritious foods. The CSP contributed

to increased production and sales of nutritious foods and reduced post-harvest losses, but targets were partially not achieved due to delays, the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, limited support with post-harvest handling technologies and weak cohesion among farmer-based organizations. The CSP contributed to the increase in production of specialized nutritious foods (SNFs) by expanding the capacity of industrial agro-processors. However, the planned expansion in the capacity of community food processors is not yet complete and thus, has not contributed to the production of SNFs. Since 2022, SNF availability in the market has declined due to unstable supply chains, leading to irregular supply to retail shops and by extension unmet consumer demand.

Strategic Outcome 3 (Capacity strengthening) focused on enhancing the targeting and management of food security, nutrition, and social protection programmes. The evaluation finds that CCS enhanced WFP's 'enabler' role in Ghana but was not guided by a clear overall intervention logic. Capacity strengthening interventions showed positive results for the school feeding programme, the establishment of a food security and nutrition monitoring system (FSNMS) and a flood information system. Interventions to strengthen national social protection systems and the financial inclusion of women were however at too early a stage to have generated results.

Strategic Outcome 4 (Policy and advocacy coherence) aimed to support government efforts through advocacy and effective policy frameworks. Data challenges plus a lack of clarity on targeted national entities and sectors impeded performance assessment of this strategic objective. Although some efforts were underway, contributions to outcomes were limited due to incomplete or delayed interventions.

Strategic Outcome 5 (Crisis response) successfully addressed the food security and nutrition needs of people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the anticipated refugee influx and low rate of return to school for adolescent girls' after the Covid-19 pandemic did not materialize and related interventions were thus not implemented.

WFP adhered to protection principles and established a mechanism to ensure Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The CSP contributed to gender equality, particularly in its nutrition and food systems components and made deliberate efforts to address the diverse needs of different beneficiary groups. Environmental protection measures were successfully integrated, and climate adaptation mainstreamed, although the CSP design did not explicitly consider climate change. While mechanisms for accountability to affected populations are in place, more effective consultation is needed, as well as a stronger and more deliberate focus on disability inclusion in the CSP design.

WFP's efficient use of resources in contributing to CSP outputs and strategic outcomes

The implementation of CSP activities faced significant delays, with most activities not being completed within their designated timeframes. Delays were attributed to factors such as implementation constraints, national processes for legislative and policy reform, COVID-19 restrictions, and funding challenges. The expenditure rate for allocated resources was low to moderate, with a significant portion of funds remaining unspent. Despite these challenges, the CSP demonstrated effective targeting and coverage of vulnerable populations through well-defined criteria and approaches. However, the geographical coverage was limited due to financial constraints, preventing the extension of services to other districts with poor nutrition outcomes.

Factors that explain WFP performance

The CSP faced funding challenges, with inadequate and unstable resources, dependency on a limited number of donors, and imbalanced funding of strategic outcomes relative to the planned budget. The monitoring and reporting system had limitations in tracking progress effectively, particularly in supporting WFP's transition to an enabler role; though it did help inform decision-making. The lack of an explicit management plan for aligning staff capacity to the new enabler role and delays in decision-making processes impeded performance.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

Overall, WFP made progress in Ghana in shifting from delivering assistance to enabling national capacities. It demonstrated how market-based approaches to strengthening food systems can improve nutrition.

The CSP supported the Government in addressing food security and nutrition needs of vulnerable populations. However, its intervention logic could have better linked community-level activities with capacity strengthening and policy coherence interventions.

The CSP remained relevant to needs throughout and adapted well to COVID-19. However, it did not adequately address capacity gaps for crisis preparedness, community resilience, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

The shift to an enabler role was hampered by lack of a clear management plan and by limited funding for capacity strengthening and policy coherence interventions.

Gender equality and protection were integrated successfully, but affected populations were not consistently consulted.

Partnerships with Government and private sector were crucial, but collaboration with UN agencies was limited

Recommendations

1. WFP should define its strategic focus as an enabler and facilitator within the Ghana context
2. WFP should deepen and align partnerships with private sector, civil society organizations, academia, UN agencies and other development partners
3. WFP should focus on support to the Government for emergency preparedness and response, in partnership with others
4. WFP should improve timeliness through enhanced collaboration with cooperating partners and by using innovative financing methods
5. WFP should assist the Government in establishing sustainable market-based approaches for strengthening food systems and scale up the nutrition-sensitive livelihood programme
6. WFP should review the accountability to affected populations mechanism and address bottlenecks to ensure all beneficiaries are well informed about WFP programmes