



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Senegal WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023

CONTEXT

Senegal is a lower-middle-income country with a population of 17.7 million inhabitants, 40 percent of whom live in urban areas. The country has been affected by climate change and faces issues such as drought and land degradation, which impact the food security and vulnerability of poor households. Poverty affects more than one third of its population and is particularly acute in rural areas.

Despite comprising more than 60 percent of the agricultural workforce, women have far less access to productive resources than men and are accordingly more vulnerable to food insecurity.

The United Nations development assistance framework 2019–2023 supports the Government's Plan Sénégal Émergent 2035, including in the areas of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and access to social protection.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The CSP (2019–2023) marked a change in WFP's focus from operations- and programme-based planning to multi-year strategic planning. This shift allowed WFP to take a longer-term, holistic approach with a view to facilitating integration among focus areas and objectives. The CSP was focused on three key areas: social protection, nutrition and resilience in relation to climate change.

Following two budget revisions, the CSP needs-based plan increased from USD 74.8 million for 1 million planned beneficiaries to USD 106 million for 1.56 million planned beneficiaries. As of April 2023, the overall funding level of the CSP was close to 50 percent of the needs-based plan.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation to provide evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next CSP for Senegal. The evaluation covered all WFP activities implemented between 2018 and July 2022 including WFP's strategic positioning, its effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes, the efficiency of CSP implementation and factors explaining WFP's performance.

The main intended users of the evaluation are the WFP country office, the Regional Bureau for Western Africa, technical divisions at WFP headquarters, the WFP Executive Board, the Government of Senegal, other United Nations entities in Senegal, donors and civil society organizations.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance and strategic positioning

Evidence from surveys and studies on food and nutrition security and resilience carried out by national and UN entities has regularly informed decisions regarding the geographical targeting of CSP activities, coverage and tailoring of assistance, and the interventions were directed to the poorest areas and to population groups most vulnerable to shocks.

WFP supported the United Nations system's emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis: cash-based transfers were largely used to cover the basic food, hygiene, health and schooling needs, while nutrition interventions responded to emergency nutritional needs.

WFP's strategic orientation has been largely in line with government policies. The CSP contributed to the national development plan through high-level partnerships. WFP's positioning with national institutions has been particularly satisfactory in relation to school feeding and nutrition. WFP is also positioning itself as an important player in improving resilience to climate change in rural areas – although it lacked specific technical competence in some areas – and is mobilizing significant resources for work in this domain, where it has a recognized advantage in agricultural insurance.

Partnerships are in place with several other United Nations entities, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). There are substantial and important opportunities for strengthening operational coordination and synergies, particularly with the other Rome-based agencies in the area of resilience

Contribution to CSP outcomes in Senegal

Lean season support was appreciated by beneficiaries but only partially covered needs: while WFP's intervention most likely limited the incidence of food insecurity, there were little improvements in

households' food security outcomes. Unconditional cash-based transfers (CBTs) were implemented during the lean seasons from 2018 to 2020, but the duration of the activity was curtailed due to lack of resources.

Nutrition activities included distributions of specialized nutritious foods and behaviour change communication campaigns, but their coverage was affected by resource constraints and access challenges. While the performance targets for moderate acute malnutrition treatment were largely met, the desired changes in dietary habits did not occur. As a positive unintended outcome, malnutrition prevention activities resulted in increased consultations and visits to health centres, allowing improved vaccination coverage. Food fortification showed positive results improving production volume, quality and consumption of iodized salt.

WFP provided **school meals** to vulnerable children in targeted departments building on and stimulating local food production and trade. However, school canteens were only marginal used to boost nutrition activities or to strengthen local production, despite initial intentions on integration of activities. School enrolment rates showed encouraging results.

Resilience activities comprised food assistance for assets activities, support for smallholder productivity, risk management and agricultural insurance schemes. Planned results in terms of income generation and resilience were met or exceeded. A good level of integration was achieved between food assistance for assets initiatives and those supporting smallholder productivity. While climate information and financial inclusion services performed well, the support for community cereal banks struggled to put in place viable inventory credit mechanisms (warrantage). The agricultural insurance programme broadened its coverage year by year, and could further improve in communication and beneficiary awareness.

Institutional capacities have been greatly strengthened in the areas of school feeding and the prevention and treatment of malnutrition, and the Government is becoming increasingly autonomous in the management of those activities. In contrast, CBT activities in response to crises or for resilience support have not been accompanied by solid institutional capacity strengthening initiatives, nor have they sufficiently taken into account the Government's cash-based national social protection interventions.

During **COVID-19 crisis response**, cash-based assistance contributed to improvements in beneficiaries' food consumption, however no significant changes were observed in dietary diversity among women and in the consumption of a minimum acceptable diet among children. This is explained by the short duration of the interventions, their low coverage and their lack of links to awareness-raising activities.

Cross-cutting results

Gender equality. Men and women participated equally in WFP interventions, and resilience activities supported women's financial empowerment and social cohesion in communities, but, overall, a deterioration in intra-household joint decision-making was observed.

WFP activities were conducted in accordance with the **humanitarian principles**, however WFP's independence in scaling up emergency assistance when and where needed was restricted due to donor priorities in other areas. The country office ensured protection of the most vulnerable people across all interventions, but CSP implementation lacked tailored approaches for specific vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities or victims of violence.

Environment. Resilience building activities contributed to natural resource conservation and ecosystem resilience, but more rigorous studies of watersheds are needed to inform lowland development and soil conservation work.

Sustainability. Institutional capacity strengthening efforts laid the foundations for increased government ownership of school feeding and malnutrition management, but full handover to government entities of crisis response and resilience building activities is not yet realistic.

Nexus. The integration of humanitarian and development actions was generally well managed and has strengthened social cohesion among affected populations.

Efficient use of resources

WFP showed strong adaptive capacity to changing circumstances and new government requests, especially during COVID-19. The gradual shift to cash-based transfers improved efficiency and transparency and reduced operational costs.

WFP targeted vulnerable populations using data from the Cadre Harmonisé and single social registry, as well as targeting committees at community level. Targeting could further be improved to enhance integration and reduce geographical dispersion of activities.

Factors that explain WFP performance

Strategic partnerships with governmental agencies varied in depth and WFP's engagement in social protection discussions could be strengthened for better integration with the Government.

Resource mobilization has improved since 2020, with contributions becoming more flexible and earmarked funding mainly for resilience activities.

Human resources in the country office were generally experienced, but high turnover impeded a clear strategic vision and partnerships. Opportunities exist to further integrate staff profiles with expertise in policy dialogue and social protection.

The **monitoring and evaluation** system improved but still needs increased accessibility and use by management for strategic decision-making.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The CSP was relevant to Senegal's context and WFP is highly valued as a partner by the Government and its partners. Some gaps exist in WFP's strategic positioning, such as linkages with the national social protection programme, integration of activities, and inter-agency cooperation on resilience.

Operational effectiveness and efficiency varied across activities, with successful responses to COVID-19 and resilience, mixed results for cash transfers for lean season support, and malnutrition. More could be done to demonstrate WFP's contribution to gender equality in Senegal. The shift to cash-based transfers was effective in reducing transfer costs.

In Senegal's stable context, sustainability is a priority, requiring more efforts on institutional capacity strengthening.

Recommendations

1. Continue national policy support in food and nutrition security, social protection, emergency response and climate change resilience.
2. Improve operational convergence and coherence, especially in social protection, resilience and nutrition.
3. Enhance efficiency in terms of contracting of cooperating partners and digitalisation of electronic transfers.
4. Consolidate and strengthen support to the National School Feeding Programme and promote the Home-Grown School Feeding approach.
5. Develop a strategy on gender equality and women's empowerment.
6. Further improve the monitoring system.