



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Dominican Republic WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023

CONTEXT

The Dominican Republic is an upper middle country with a population of 11.1 million people, 1/3 between 0 and 14 years of age.

Despite progress in reducing wasting and stunting, the prevalence of anaemia is still high and obesity accounts for for 33 percent of the school-age population.

Due to its geographical location, the country is continuously exposed to natural disasters, in particular floods and hurricanes, and is at a high risk of seismic activity.

More than 80 percent of the migrant population in Dominican Republic are Haitians, many vulnerable and at risk of social exclusion. Gender inequality is an important concern, particularly with regard to gender-based domestic violence and early marriage.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The CSP (2019–2023) was preceded by a transitional interim CSP supporting the Government’s flagship social protection programme, Supérate. The CSP was designed to continue WFP’s shift from direct implementation to strengthening national capacity around five strategic outcomes focusing on improving nutrition for vulnerable people, building people and partners’ resilience to shocks, responding to emergencies and providing logistics services.

The original needs-based plan of USD 10.2 million aimed to reach 300,000 direct beneficiaries over four years. It was revised four times (as of December 2022), resulting in an increase of the budget to USD 45.1 million and an increase in planned beneficiaries to 510,400 million. The CSP was 46 percent funded as of December 2022.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next CSP for Dominican Republic. The evaluation covered all WFP activities implemented between 2018 and 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 include the WFP Dominican Republic country office, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, technical divisions at headquarters, target programme recipients, the Government of Dominican Republic, partners and donors.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

CSP design and responsiveness to evolving context

The design of the CSP was informed by extensive consultation with stakeholders as well as context and risk analyses looking at hunger challenges, food security and nutrition.

The CSP objectives were well aligned with national policies, strategies and plans, particularly in the areas of national health and social protection systems, food security and nutrition, and emergency preparedness and response.

Programmatic alignment within the United Nations did not always translate into optimal operational coordination on the ground and considerable overlap of competencies was observed, especially Rome-based agencies in the area of food security.

WFP demonstrated a clear comparative advantage in logistical support as well as in building adaptive social protection capacity, although there is a scope for further engagement on the latter.

WFP remained relevant throughout CSP implementation. It ensured timely partnership realignment or development in response to context dynamics, including political and institutional changes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contribution to CSP outcomes in Dominican Republic

WFP made important contributions to **strengthening the capacity of national and local health institutes** to provide country-wide nutritional assistance, though challenges remain for inter-institutional coordination.

WFP has provided significant support to partners to develop campaign and counselling activities, **behaviorial change** communication on zero hunger, addressing the triple burden of malnutrition. Moreover, WFP’s brokering role led to strategic partnerships with the private sector.

The school-feeding institutional architecture is now well established and widely recognized by partners and beneficiary groups. The national **social protection programme** (*Supérate*) has reached wide national coverage. The Government has become the primary funder of these programmes, and WFP's role is evolving towards more specific, on-demand technical assistance and service delivery

WFP's training and technical assistance on **early warning** and forecast-based drought and flood alerts contributed to enhancing the capacity of regional and local partners to assess and manage climate risks in support of vulnerable communities

WFP technical assistance was instrumental in mainstreaming cash-based transfers as a national **emergency response** mechanism, although more effort is needed to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus. WFP supported the establishment and the functioning of the humanitarian corridor between Haiti and Dominican Republic.

Cross-cutting themes.

WFP showed full commitment to the **humanitarian principles** of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality throughout CSP implementation. It also paid attention to protection and **accountability to affected populations**, albeit not systematically due to limited human resource capacity, especially for people living with HIV, people with disabilities and young people.

WFP interventions have considered the principles of **gender equality** and **inclusion**, though most often limited to participation in activities and targeting of beneficiaries, but not dedicated approaches were designed for these groups.

Key partners show strong ownership of and commitment to WFP's capacity strengthening interventions. Good capacity in government and partners' institutions was observed to **sustain and expand** the work initiated and supported by WFP in food security, nutrition and social protection, though demand for specific services remains.

The CSP did not include a strategy for transitioning from humanitarian to development interventions. The **humanitarian-development nexus** was poorly developed at both the planning and the implementation levels.

WFP's **coverage** prioritized regions with higher vulnerability to disasters and with a higher concentration of Haitian migrants, advocating for the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the national social protection strategies.

Efficient use of resources

WFP has experienced delays in implementing planned activities, particularly those related to COVID-19 responses. However, since 2021, WFP demonstrated adaptability to the changing needs improving the delivery of outputs.

The response to the Hurricane Fiona was rolled out within one month, reprioritizing the target areas and conducting a rapid market assessment to inform the national social protection programme.

Short duration of donors' grants affect the efficiency of WFP interventions. The design phase for short-term projects can be costly and time-consuming, even more resource-intensive than actual project implementation. In addition, the short-term duration of projects limit opportunities to establish and nurture partnerships.

Factors that explain WFP performance

WFP successfully mobilized resources over the CSP period, matching the existing country office implementation capacity. However, Donors' priorities have influenced the scope and focus of the CSP.

Monitoring and evaluation system were inadequate to inform implementation and adaptation of WFP interventions. Human resources are limited to deliver the ambitious CSP targets and maintain organizational structure.

WFP developed strong and long-term relations with state institutions and has established multi-stakeholder partnerships for awareness raising around zero hunger. The Government particularly valued the access to expertise provided by WFP, while civil society organizations, have a more varied view on the intensity and quality of cooperation with WFP.

Key inhibiting factors include coordination challenges within the national system for disaster prevention, mitigation and response; exclusion of Haitian migrants and refugees; and limited integration of the country within the Caribbean region.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation concluded that the CSP was relevant to needs in the Dominican Republic and well tailored to its status as an upper-middle-income country.

The CSP was aligned with national policies and priorities and WFP is positioned as a trusted partner for government institutions, civil society and the private sector, who recognize its role and competencies in contributing to SDG 2.

The CSP was implemented with a strong focus on five distinct strategic outcomes, some of which had specific theories of change, but the lack of a theory of change at the aggregate level contributed to a siloed approach to implementation, limiting internal synergy.

WFP established strong and durable partnerships during the CSP implementation period, mainly with line ministries and public institutions, who expressed a high level of satisfaction with the technical assistance and services it provided

Finally, WFP's vision of a strategic shift towards enabling capacities is currently mismatched with a budget strongly weighted towards emergency response. Sustaining this shift will require longer-term commitments by donors, whose policies and strategies may not be fully coherent with WFP's vision of a strategic shift.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Next CSP should more closely reflect the specific political and economic situation of the Dominican Republic.

Recommendation 2. The intervention logic should be strengthened in the next CSP to enable more synergy across different strategic outcomes.

Recommendation 3. Develop a strategy for providing government partners with technical assistance on demand.

Recommendation 4. Develop a specific approach and strategy to strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus in its work.

Recommendation 5. Continue to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Haiti by mobilizing humanitarian assistance in disaster and emergency-related response

Recommendation 6. More focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, inclusion, and accountability to affected populations/protection in planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation.