



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

Final evaluation of the first phase (2015–2021) of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Côte d'Ivoire

CONTEXT

To continue supporting the school feeding program in Côte d'Ivoire, the WFP has mobilized McGovern-Dole funds from the USDA for the years from 2015 to 2021 (Phase 1) and from 2021 to 2025 (Phase 2). The first phase of the McGovern-Dole program has six components: 1) provision of hot meals to students; 2) take-home rations; 3) deworming of pupils; 4) literacy and reading activities in the form of improved reading materials, teacher trainings, and capacity building; 5) training of canteen managers in the use of health and food practices; and 6) capacity building of farm groups around the canteens in schools. The objectives of the McGovern-Dole school feeding program consist of increasing student enrollment, alleviating short-term hunger through school meals, improving student health and nutrition, improving literacy, and increasing capacity of communities and smallholder farmers to support schools. The program also includes an emphasis on gender equality, which is mainstreamed throughout the activities.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The subject of the evaluation at hand is Phase 1 of the McGovern-Dole program in Cote d'Ivoire, covering all seven regions of implementation (Poros, Bagoué, Tchologo, Bounkani, Gontougo, Bafing, and Cavally). The focus was put on the results obtained of the project through the issues of relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, efficiency and impacts of différents activities.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The objectives of these evaluations consist to report the performance and results of the school feeding program supported by McGovern-Dole funding. It also analyzes the significant results achieved by this program to understand the determinants of these results, which will lead to lessons and good practices that will be widely disseminated within the organization to inform operational and strategic decisions.

The expected users are the WFP Country Office and its decision-making partners, the Regional Bureau, WFP Headquarters in Rome, Evaluation Bureau, WFP Executive

Board, MENA, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and ANADER, United Nations country team, Steering Committee, Technical Committee, Directorate of School Canteens (DCS), AVSI, the USDA, and other stakeholders.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance and Coherence

The McGovern-Dole program is highly relevant to the needs of the target population and is well aligned to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire's priorities as specified in the National School Feeding Policy. Respondents agreed that providing school meals in rural areas with high levels of food insecurity encourages children to attend school regularly, remain at school through the lunch hour, and be able to learn free from the distraction of hunger. The McGovern-Dole program is consistent with the policies and programs of key partners, including United Nations (UN) agencies, and adheres to the WFP's humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence.

Effectiveness

Our evaluation shows that many outcomes improved since baseline but many of these improvements have stagnated or even deteriorated since midline. Part of these trends can be explained by the large improvements between baseline and midline, such as the availability of school canteens reaching nearly 100% by midline. Over the course of the program, Evaluation found that steady increase in the girl/boy enrollment ratio, with older grades seeing the largest increase coming from CM1 and CM2 (the equivalent of grades 5 and 6). These ratios have increased from 0.76 to 1.07. This trend toward higher proportion of girls in school was driven by an increase in girls' enrollment and a decrease in boys' enrollment, which may be driven by the provision of take-home rations for girls only.

Regarding literacy, it found that children were reading at lower levels than at midline. However, it found that 41 percent of teachers were delivering reading instruction in their local language, an increase from past iterations of the evaluation. Although this increase is promising, considering the proven

benefits of mother tongue education, it could explain the lower literacy scores at endline. Lower literacy scores at end could also be explained by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic or the turnover of teachers who AVSI had already trained in the syllabic teaching method.

In addition, teachers generally were present to deliver instruction and had received the necessary training: directors' records indicated that teachers showed up for their classes 95 percent of the time, and 92 percent of school directors reported that the teachers in their school have received an AVSI training on reading instruction. However, teachers reported being visited by pedagogical advisors only once or twice per year, and only 26 percent of teachers reported receiving regular trainings organized by MENA. These low levels of support from MENA and the pedagogical advisors are not necessarily sufficient for teacher development, particularly considering that only half of teachers reported being able to finish their curriculum.

In terms of school feeding, quality of canteen services appeared to have declined. Households reported that canteen quality decreased, and the number of canteens serving the minimum dietary diversity standards decreased from 82.5 percent at midline to only 66.8 percent at endline.

Efficiency

Overall, the WFP carried out the McGovern-Dole program efficiently. The program has a tight budget, which required the WFP to work as cost-efficiently as possible. Stakeholders claimed that the WFP managed the McGovern-Dole program with sufficient technical expertise and systems in place to help activities take place smoothly in the event of unexpected issues. The partners also claimed to experience efficient collaboration.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other crises such as insecurity in the north of Côte d'Ivoire, most often the McGovern-Dole activities took place in a timely manner. However, the program did experience some delays in the distribution of literacy materials and a lack of deworming tablets.

Targeting rural areas with high levels of food insecurity allowed the program to reach areas of most need. In addition, targeting girls to receive dry rations helped promote girls' school enrollment, although it may have created negative side effects for boys. Targeting women in the WPGs also had unintended consequences because it inadvertently caused women to bear additional costs and workload while it failed to generate income for women.

Impacts

Evaluation detects few causal impacts of the program on key child learning or nutrition outcomes. It finds that children's reading levels and proficiency in treated schools had not improved relative to the children in comparison schools. However, Evaluation did find positive impacts of the program on children's enjoyment of reading, which can be an important precursor to reading practices.

Lastly, while evaluation finds no overall impacts for dietary diversity or coping strategies, we do find that households of the girls in our sample were more likely to eat certain nutritious foods, such as leafy green vegetables, fruit, and dairy.

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the management response are available at <http://www.wfp.org/independent-evaluation>. For more information please contact the Office of Evaluation wfp.decentralizedevaluation@wfp.org

Sustainability

The key factors affecting the sustainability of the program are funding and government commitment to activities and policies. Although WPGs and COGES were committed to continuing their ongoing contributions to the schools, the program's ability to continue without some continued financial assistance and ongoing training is weak. Program data did not clearly delineate how many canteen days were supported through McGovern-Dole and how much the community contributed independently, thus making it difficult to assess whether any gradual handover to the community occurred. With the decreases in the quality and quantity of food served in the canteens, groups

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Student experience and performance. Providing school meals continued to encourage children to attend school and remain in school throughout the day. Students have maintained the positive reading practices and attitudes reported at midline but reading proficiency rates declined between midline and endline. A number of factors may have contributed to the decline, including prolonged school closures due to COVID-19. Access to potable water and latrines at schools improved between midline and endline, although roughly a quarter of schools still had non-functional latrines.

Teacher experience and performance. As was the case at midline, teachers continued to use a variety of activities and tools to teach reading. The percentage of teachers trained by AVSI declined from 92% at midline to 63% at endline, perhaps due in part to high rates of teacher turnover.

The relevant recommendations for this final evaluation report of McGovern-Dole project (phase I) are :

Recommendation 1 Track and report on the number days and number of canteen meals in all schools that are supported by WFP and those that are supported by community contributions by using information gathered in canteen management documentation.

Recommendation 2. Consider the potential unintended consequences of gender-specific interventions and supports, such as providing take-home rations to girls only.

Recommendation 3. Provide tailored support to WPGs based on their specific needs. For example, different groups require different productive inputs and equipment, different types of training, and so forth.

Recommendation 4. Work with WPGs to track their crop yields, production, and profitability margin more closely.

Recommendation 5. Work with MENA to reinforce teacher professional development and supports, including through more active involvement of the pedagogical advisors.

Recommendation 6. Consider potential synergies with programs such as the Education Service Delivery Enhancement Project (PAPSE) which are working towards similar objectives in some of the same areas WFP is operating?

Recommendation 7. Work with MENA to determine the feasibility of assessing early reading skills in mother tongue rather than French in schools where teachers are teaching early reading in mother tongue.