



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Madagascar WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019–2023

CONTEXT

Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world with a population of 28.2 million inhabitants. The country is affected by multidimensional poverty and chronic malnutrition, with stunting rates among children under 5 being above 40 percent in 2020. Madagascar also faces intense meteorological and climatic phenomena such as recurrent droughts, floods and cyclones. The 2022 cyclone season was one of the most disruptive in the last decades, affecting nearly one million people in the first half of the year.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The strategic shift related to adoption of the CSP approach allowed WFP to adopt a multi-year and more integrated approach to its country programming. Through the CSP, WFP Madagascar aimed to i) continue positioning itself as a leading actor in the crisis response domain; ii) include more resilience-building activities; iii) contribute to addressing chronic malnutrition; iv) provide institutional support to the Government and v) provide common services to the humanitarian community. Following four budget revisions, the CSP needs-based plan increased from USD 297 million for 3.1 million planned beneficiaries to USD 628 million for 4.7 million planned beneficiaries. As of October 2023, the overall funding level was close to 53 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 Madagascar. The evaluation covered all WFP activities implemented between 2018 and September 2022 and examined 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 Southern Africa, technical divisions at WFP headquarters, the WFP Executive Board, the Government of Madagascar, other United Nations entities in Madagascar, donors and civil society organizations.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance and strategic positioning

The WFP portfolio is strategically aligned with national policies and strategies, and there are promising agreements between WFP and its state partners for all strategic outcomes. For example, WFP's school feeding activities are based on national policies, and links with local partners are also developing. WFP made significant efforts in managing and harmonizing evidence to develop and inform its programs effectively, with room for improving the evidence base serving longer-term programming.

WFP prioritized its activities in the Southern regions of the country in view of its operational capacities, although national nutrition data clearly indicate that there are pockets of malnutrition outside the southern region. WFP's role in saving lives is acknowledged, and its presence remains relevant for rapid-onset hazards like cyclones. On the other hand, several stakeholders (including Government counterparts, donors and civil society actors) question its strategic positioning in addressing long-term structural, socio-economic, and environmental crises such as droughts in the Southern regions. Resilience programming has begun to address concerns related to access to water, with room to scale-up.

External and internal coherence

Overall, partnerships with UN agencies were not a strong feature of the CSP. Some exceptions were recognized, including WFP's close collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank in crisis response, and with UNDP and ILO on gender and human rights issues. WFP appropriately played the role of service provider to the humanitarian community during emergency responses, e.g. in the aftermath of cyclones, particularly in telecommunications and air transport through UNHAS and logistics expertise.

Regarding the internal programme logic, the CSP currently operates in separate programmatic silos, lacking formal links and concrete synergies across strategic outcomes. As an example, the creation of community gardens is being encouraged in three separate SOs, with missed opportunities for harmonization and cross-learning. Efforts are being made to improve synergies and integration between different interventions, but lack of institutionalization of such linkages across strategic outcomes, time constraints and limited resources have hindered progress.

Contribution to CSP outcomes in Madagascar

Crisis response. WFP achieved good coverage of COVID-19- and natural shocks-affected populations and specific vulnerable groups, stabilising food security and rehabilitating infrastructures. Targets in terms of adequate nutritional intake, especially among women, were not achieved.

School meals. Results in terms of attendance and retention were overall positive, despite smaller than planned food rations and COVID-19-related challenges. In 2021, WFP introduced cash transfers, to diversify children's meals and support local production. In terms of institutional support, more efforts are necessary to strengthen capacities around food procurement and storage.

Nutrition. While the intervention showed positive results in terms of coverage and adherence, dietary diversity and children's diets fell below expectations. WFP supported the development of several key national policies and helped private sector companies fortify their products and sell them on the market on a wider scale.

Resilience activities. The CSP focused on geographically targeted and integrated resilience efforts. Interventions were relatively small-scale and insufficient to counter the impact of shocks and the underlying causes of food and nutrition insecurity. There is potential for greater collaboration with other UN entities with complementary expertise. Overall, more evidence is needed to confirm the potential and the effects of WFP resilience activities in Madagascar.

Government and inter-agency support. The implementation of UNHAS and telecommunications support were highly appreciated by partners. WFP capacity strengthening initiatives on disaster risk management are relevant, but should focus more on partners' acquisition of capabilities. A clear WFP position on a multi-actor approach to preparedness and integrated risk management in line with the Sendai Framework for Action was missing.

Cross-cutting results

Gender equality. WFP has implemented tools and initiatives to promote gender equality, involving women's groups in various income-generating and advocacy activities. More in-depth intra-households analysis is needed. The perception and adjustment of affected communities to WFP's gender-related practices and its integration into activities is neither known nor documented.

Protection and accountability to affected populations. Complaints and feedback mechanisms, including a hotline and community committees, have supported accountability towards affected populations, and provided a basis for adjustments to programme targeting, but need to be expanded and made more accessible. Opportunities exist to better apply the "do no harm" principle through further consideration of socio-economic dynamics within communities to avoid risks of inequitable targeting.

Environment and sustainability. There is room for greater attention to climate-related needs assessment and strategic attention to environmental issues, particularly in light of the climatic challenges the country faces. WFP efforts included incorporating 'soft' activities in emergency responses, such as improving communication and coordination, securing sustained Government funding, and emphasizing locally rooted approaches. Investment in long-term partnerships with local organizations and the private sector was a relevant innovation.

Nexus. The CSP has not yet visibly established strategic linkages for the nexus. Efforts are being made through the Joint United Nations Social Protection Program. However, there is room for improvement in considering the impact of WFP's emergency response actions on the development efforts that should follow them and in developing exit strategies for activities and the CSP as a whole. There is room for greater inclusion of development actors in WFP's crisis response activities to prepare beneficiaries for the scale-down of WFP assistance.

Efficient use of resources

The large expansion in activities since 2020, combined with internal capacity limitations, have led to delays in a significant proportion of the activity portfolio. WFP made concrete efforts to address these challenges, and improve its logistical capacity - including new shipping routes, pre-positioning, increased storage capacity and revised transport contracts - had positive effects on the timeliness of WFP interventions. WFP is also working on improving access procedures by partnering with local organizations that enjoy a better understanding of the operational context and higher agility of movement. Over time, efficiency of WFP activities has improved through the expanded use of cash-based transfers (CBT), which both reduce logistical costs and allow for easier access to diverse food options, although specific challenges exist, associated with inflation and network infrastructures.

Factors

WFP was significantly more successful in attracting funding for crisis response than for resilience-building activities, and funds' earmarking poses limitations in terms of securing resources for the latter. Despite expansion of WFP workforce, understaffing issues persist, compromising interventions' quality, especially for crisis response, monitoring, and support units. Lack of staff with the necessary profiles in specific areas hinders advocacy, coordination and capacity strengthening efforts. Over time, improvements in activity monitoring have enabled WFP and its cooperating partners to oversee program progress and to adopt corrective measures where necessary. Monitoring has gradually gained independence from the program function, however organizational challenges persist. WFP established solid links with the Government, but more efforts are needed on technical training, design and implementation of field activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation recognizes the strong efforts undertaken by WFP to achieve a good level of results during one of the most tumultuous and crisis-affected periods in Madagascar. WFP is a key player in the humanitarian response in Madagascar and is the partner of choice for many donors, especially for crisis response and rapid-onset hazards such as cyclones and floods. However, the geographic targeting of some WFP activities does not reflect the entire situation of poverty and malnutrition in the country. WFP's achievements are due in part to its ability to mobilize additional financial resources to respond to crises, to innovate and to increasingly integrate local organizations into its operations. The CSP lacked alignment with the Sendai Framework for Action as a strategic orientation for its preparedness work. Engagement with Government actors would benefit from a more detailed capacity strengthening and phase-out strategy by WFP. WFP Madagascar's architecture is optimized for rapid-onset crises, and not yet fully equipped for an integrated approach as envisaged in the CSP design. Its diverse and growing portfolio focused on resilience, but it needs to be contextualized with more consolidated evidence of its results. There are opportunities for WFP to contribute more strongly to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Recommendations

1. Invest in integrated risk management, including preparedness
2. Advocate for an enabling environment at Government level for its integrated risk management, crisis preparedness and response.
3. Establish a stronger evidence base for determining the value of WFP's activities beyond humanitarian response.
4. Develop, deliver and monitor an awareness programme to encourage WFP staff to consider more carefully the potentially harmful impacts of humanitarian and development assistance.
5. Establish or reactivate an internal unit for vision and integration within the Country Office.