

Evaluation of Sierra Leone WFP Country Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Summary Terms of Reference

Country Strategic Plan Evaluations (CSPEs) encompass the entirety of WFP activities during a specific period. Their purpose is twofold: 1) to provide evaluation evidence and learning on WFP's performance for country-level strategic decisions, specifically for developing the next Country Strategic Plan and 2) to provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.

Subject and focus of the evaluation

WFP has been providing humanitarian assistance in Sierra Leone since 1968. The Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (T-ICSP) was introduced to allow the time for the government of Sierra Leone with WFP's support to finalize the Zero Hunger Strategic Review (ZHSR).

The Country Strategic Plan 2020-2024, which has been extended until 2025, maintained a similar combination of focus areas as the T-ICSP, but there were some strategic changes. There was a shift from targeting food-insecure populations to focusing entirely onto primary school children through school feeding and support to the government in the national school feeding programme. Another important change was the shift away from malnutrition treatment to prevention. The CSP commits to contribute to gender equality in Sierra Leone by including a range of gender-responsive, gender-equitable and gender-transformative approaches across strategic outcomes.

The Sierra Leone CSP was approved with a budget of USD 53.3 million, of which 53 percent was funded as of July 2023. The CSP has undergone four revisions thus far that have more than doubled the needs-based plan to about USD 118 million. Key changes included: merging school feeding activities for easier resource management; response to COVID-19; support national disaster preparedness and response through service provision.

The evaluation will focus on assessing progress towards the CSP expected outcomes and cross cutting results, establishing plausible causal relations between the outputs of WFP activities, the implementation process, the operational environment and the changes observed at the outcome level, including any unintended consequences. It will give attention to assessing the adherence to humanitarian principles, gender equality, protection, and accountability to affected populations (AAP).

The evaluation will adopt standard UNEG and OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, namely: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability as well as connectedness and coverage as applicable.

Objectives and stakeholders of the evaluation

WFP evaluations serve the dual objectives of accountability and learning. As such, this evaluation will: (i) provide evaluation evidence and learning on WFP performance for country-level strategic decisions, specifically for developing the future engagement of WFP in Sierra Leone that will be anchored on the new Country Strategic Plan; and (ii) provide accountability for results to WFP stakeholders.

The evaluation report will be presented at the Executive Board session in June 2025.

Key evaluation questions

The evaluation will address the following four key questions:

QUESTION 1: To what extent is the CSP evidence based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

The evaluation will assess the extent to which the CSP is informed by evidence, relevant to address the food security and nutrition challenges prevailing in the country and aligned to national policies and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will further assess whether the CSP includes the appropriate strategic partnerships and is designed based on a clear theory of change that realistically articulates WFP roles and contribution based on the comparative advantage of WFP in the country.

Finally, it will assess the extent to which WFP's strategic positioning remained relevant throughout the CSP implementation period, considering changing context, national capacities and needs, including in relation to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

QUESTION 2: What is the extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes and the UNSDCF in Sierra Leone?

The evaluation will assess the extent to which WFP delivered the expected outputs and contributed to the expected strategic outcomes of the CSP, and of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. It will also assess the achievement of cross-cutting aims (humanitarian principles, protection, accountability to affected populations, gender equality and other equity considerations, environment, and climate change); the extent to which the achievements of the CSP are likely to be sustainable; and whether the CSP facilitated more strategic linkages between humanitarian, development and, where appropriate, peace work.

QUESTION 3: To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

The evaluation will assess whether outputs were delivered within the intended timeframe, and whether the depth and breadth of coverage ensured that the most vulnerable to food insecurity could benefit from the programmes. It will also assess the cost-efficiency of the delivery of assistance, and whether alternative, more cost-effective measures were considered.

QUESTION 4: What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan?

The evaluation will assess the extent to which WFP has been able to mobilize adequate, timely, predictable, and flexible resources to finance the CSP and the extent to which monitoring and reporting systems have been useful to report on progress towards expected outcomes and inform management decisions. It will also assess how the partnerships and collaborations with other actors have influenced performance and results; and the extent to which the CO had appropriate Human Resources capacity to deliver on the CSP. Finally, the evaluation will seek to identify any other factors influencing WFP performance and the strategic shift expected by the CSP.

Scope, methodology and ethical considerations

The unit of analysis of this evaluation is the country strategic plan, approved by WFP Executive Board (EB), as well as any subsequent budget revisions.

The evaluation will cover all of WFP activities (including cross-cutting results) for the period from the beginning of CSP implementation in 2020 and through the end of data collection in 2024. The evaluation will look at how the CSP builds on or departs from the previous activities under the T-ICSP and assess if the envisaged strategic changes have taken place and, if so, what their consequences have been.

The evaluation will use a Theory-Based Approach by means of reconstructing a Theory of Change (ToC) to ascertain whether, to what extent and how WFP interventions in Sierra Leone contributed to the attainment of results. The CSPE will adopt a mixed methods approach. Data collection techniques will include: desk review, key informant interviews, focus group discussion, direct observations and surveys. Systematic data triangulation across different sources and methods will be carried out to validate findings and avoid bias in the evaluative judgement.

This evaluation will conform to WFP and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical standards and norms, such as ensuring informed consent, protecting privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants, ensuring cultural sensitivity, respecting the autonomy of

participants, ensuring fair recruitment of participants (including women and socially excluded groups) and ensuring that the evaluation results do no harm to participants or their communities.

Roles and responsibilities

EVALUATION TEAM: The evaluation will be conducted by a team of independent consultants with a mix of relevant expertise related to the Sierra Leone CSPE (i.e., school-based programmes, food assistance for asset, smallholder farmer support, capacity strengthening, gender, among others).

OEV EVALUATION MANAGEMENT: This evaluation will be managed by the WFP Office of Evaluation. Emmanuel Hakizimfura has been appointed as evaluation manager (EM). The appointed Research Analyst (RA) is Sanela Muharemovic. The evaluation manager will be the main interlocutor between the team, represented by the team leader, and WFP counterparts to ensure a smooth implementation process. Sergio Lenci, Senior Evaluation Officer, will provide second-level quality assurance. Anne-Claire Luzot, the Director of Evaluation, will approve the final evaluation products and present the CSPE to the WFP Executive Board.

Internal Reference Group (IRG): The IRG is composed of selected WFP stakeholders from mainly the Sierra Leone country office and the Regional Bureau of Dakar (RBD) with relevant expertise in different thematic areas.

STAKEHOLDERS: WFP stakeholders at country, regional and HQ level are expected to engage throughout the evaluation process to ensure a high degree of utility and transparency. External stakeholders, such as beneficiaries, government, donors, implementing partners and other UN agencies will be consulted during the evaluation process.

Communication

Preliminary Preliminary findings will be shared with WFP stakeholders in the Country Office and the Regional Bureau during a debriefing session in May 2024. A country learning workshop will be held in July/August 2024 to ensure a transparent evaluation process and promote ownership of the findings and preliminary recommendations by country stakeholders. Evaluation findings will be actively disseminated, and the final evaluation report will be publicly available on WFP's website.

Timing and key milestones

Inception Phase: December 2023 – March 2024

Data Collection: April – May 2024

Remote Debriefing: May 2024

Reports: June – September 2024

Learning Workshop: July/August 2024

Executive Board: June 2025