



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

# Evaluation of capacity strengthening activities to government and local communities in Sao Tome and Principe July 2019 – December 2022

## CONTEXT

Sao Tome and Principe (STP) is a small island nation located in the Gulf of Guinea, off the western coast of Central Africa. The Republic of STP has 6 districts and the Autonomous Region of Principe, with a population of about 227,380 people. STP is a lower-middle-income country with an economy based on agriculture (cocoa, coffee, and palm oil) being the main exports. Despite its potential, the country faces economic challenges, including poverty, high dependency on external aid, and an undiversified production base. The first SDGs-focused strategy elaborated by the country was aiming at zero hunger has listed a series of constraints and challenges. The fertile ground and favourable climate create the perfect environmental conditions for sustainable and value-added agricultural ventures in STP. Smallholder agriculture in STP is family-based, and dominated by polyculture. Accessible food represents a key factor in combatting and achieving zero hunger SDG 2 goal. Access to quality food is directly linked to the financial availability of its population, as the country's national production is still low, due to several factors, which leads to the consumption of imported products. Challenges in the education sector are of major concern and there is a need to develop a comprehensive home school feeding approach that is gender transformative.

While STP has taken significant steps towards promoting gender equality, entrenched social and cultural norms allow only slow changes, and gender-based discrimination is still a concern to be addressed.

## SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation focused on the activities implemented by WFP and its partners in the six districts of Sao Tome in support of capacity-strengthening activities to government

and local communities (from July 2019 to December 2022) to provide home-grown school feeding, sustainable and equitable local food value chains, stimulate local agricultural markets and provide emergency response feeding to children affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The evaluation focused on the activity 1 (School Feeding (SF)) and activity 2 (Smallholder Farmers (SHF)) implemented through capacity strengthening intervention under Strategic Outcome 1 (SO1). In relation to Activity 3 (in-kind emergency response to school-affected children during the COVID-19 pandemic) under SO2, the evaluation focused only on how the presence and work of WFP in Activity 1 and 2 have enabled its successful implementation, with the idea to inform the design of the new CSP.

## OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation had the dual objective of assessing the performance of the project (accountability) and learning valuable lessons for its future (learning). It was commissioned to (i) support the planning of the second-generation Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for the STP CO, (ii) assess WFP capacity strengthening activities, generate useful evidence on key achievements and lessons learned from current programmes, further informing the new CSP; (iii) comply with corporate requirements by conducting a Decentralised Evaluation during the current CSP (2019-2024) and (iv) inform potential areas of WFP intervention.

Among the main users, we have Internal stakeholders (WFP), including HQ, Regional Bureau for West Africa (RBD), Country Office in STP, as well as the Office of Evaluation (OEV) and we have external stakeholders, such as national governmental partners, implementing partners, NGOs, beneficiaries, including schools and school staff, smallholder farmers, children and parents, donors (Chellaram Foundation, Government of Brazil) and UN

agencies (FAO, ILO, UN-HABITAT, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, RCO).

## KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

### **1. CSP interventions contributed to a certain extent to fulfilling the government priorities, mostly through qualitative interventions by the Country Capacity Strengthening (CSS) and setting up the long-term mechanisms supporting government autonomy.**

The national priorities and goals are framed by the Transformation Agenda 2030 underpinned by the Vision “Sao Tome and Principe 2030: the Country we want to build”.

Based on the long-term stated government priorities and goals, the following were achieved: Strengthening process of PNAE (National School Feeding and Health Program), Enhanced technical background, logistical and storage infrastructure, and strengthened capacities of PNAE, role of CONSAN (National Food and Nutritional Security Council) empowered, Strengthened capacities of MAFRD (Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Rural Development) through the provision of data management software, capacities built for vulnerable farmers, with a focus on females in sustainable agricultural practices and local food production, awareness raised on gender inequalities and Gender-based violence (GVB), etc.

### **2. Limited financial resources and limited human resources capacity of WFP CO influenced the efficiency of CSP implementation. However, considering the WFP CO, the efficiency of interventions and the level of achievements within the project are remarkable.**

Financial constraints were recognized as the main strategic and programming risk to implementing the planned activities on their entire scale. As a result of the limited financial resources, some activities throughout the CSP implementation were delayed, postponed, or have not been undertaken. The efficient implementation of programmes stems from well-established relations and working communications with the government stakeholders over the years of WFP’s presence in the country. However, this status is vulnerable as a result of limited HR capacity and dependent on the current staff.

### **3. Advocacy and evidence-based interventions equipped the government with needed tools to prepare gender-sensitive national policies and brought them to some commitments.**

WFP supported multiple interventions enabling the government representatives to attend high-level meetings within South-South cooperation, leveraged CONSAN to be perceived as a respected stakeholder with valid recommendations, and delivered tools to measure and monitor performance so the evidence could be collected from various interventions and be used for planning. As reported by government stakeholders, “evidence needs to be in place to enable the government to pursue with strategic decisions”

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Overall Assessment

Work and presence of the WFP Country Office in STP are highly relevant and highly regarded by the stakeholders in the country. WFP has an important place within the donor community, STP’s government, and the country’s development. WFP is moving from a traditional operational to a more transformative actor within the country. However, a complex and well-focused approach should be maintained in these efforts, and some challenging gaps in internal capacities should be overcome.

At the same time, it is a great opportunity to use this position to attract new financial resources for its upcoming CSP. However, the visibility of WFP’s work at the community level should be fortified to strengthen the whole narrative for new financing sources. The continuous shift of priorities within the CSP 2019–2024 focuses on strengthening the government’s capacities to become independent regarding providing the School Feeding Programme. Support of local production, value chains, and access to markets and smallholder farmers are key elements to ensure the long-term sustainability and self-reliance of the country by addressing these issues. Persistent efforts are needed to support PNAE in becoming more independent and working continuously with smallholder farmers, including establishment of more synergies. This approach could mobilise other financial resources and result in long-term contributions to fulfill national and global strategies and fortify donor cooperation within the country.

### Recommendations

Main recommendations for strategic, operational and result driven actions to be put in place by STP CO managerial staff as a response to the evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned. Consultation with stakeholders was done to ensure that all recommendations are useful, realistic and feasible and are taking into consideration the contextual and organizational constraints.

**Recommendation 1.** Maintain the current strong position of WFP within the country and further reposition its role within the upcoming CSP period from operational to transformative development actor.

**Recommendation 2.** Review, adjust and strengthen country office internal capacities with perspective/in relation to more efficient implementation of CSP implementation management.

**Recommendation 3.** Ensure and periodically check the use and adoption of unified monitoring and implementation processes and intended strategic implementation of crosscutting issues and Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) throughout whole CSP.

**Recommendation 4.** Ensure that following topics and approaches are actively adopted within the implementation of new CSP and when not directly targeted create intended opportunities and synergies for including and building upon them.