



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Systemic matters in CSP design and implementation in Asia and the Pacific

Since the adoption of the [WFP Policy on Country Strategic Plans](#) (CSP) and the WFP Evaluation Policy in 2016, the WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV) has commissioned several Country Strategic Plan Evaluations (CSPEs).

Recently, WFP senior management expressed interest in learning more about systemic matters in CSP design and implementation, including recurring findings and recommended actions at strategic and operational level. The summary focuses on findings relevant to the Asia and Pacific region.

WHAT IS A SYSTEMIC MATTER?

For this summary, a systemic matter is defined as “a problem characterized by its pervasive and interconnected nature, affecting multiple components or aspects of the system, often reinforcing each other”. Systemic issues are embedded in the very structure and processes of a system. Addressing these issues often requires comprehensive and strategic interventions that go beyond treating symptoms and instead focus on transforming the underlying structures and dynamics of the system.

Authored by the WFP Office of Evaluation

10 KEY FINDINGS

1 New CSP architecture brought more flexibility but limited responsiveness. The new CSP architecture met the expectations set out by the WFP Integrated Road Map in terms of flexibility, allowing country offices to adjust to changes in the operational environment, including COVID-19. However, the structuring of the CSP around three distinct focus areas - crisis response, resilience building and root causes, and the great emphasis placed on activities in the CSP architecture, proved suboptimal. Evaluations found that these structural limitations affected responsiveness and unintentionally led to more donor earmarking.

GOOD PRACTICES

WFP **Pakistan** Country Office, which had included a strategic outcome under the crisis response focus area in the original CSP design, was able to scale up its operations during crises more rapidly than country offices operating in middle income countries which did not have a ‘dormant’ strategic outcome on crisis response.

2 Lack of comprehensive theories of change limited integrated programming. The shift from the Country Portfolio to the CSP structure foresaw an ambitious change from separate projects implementation to a more cohesive approach to programming. However, the lack of comprehensive theories of change in the first generation CSPs limited integrated programming in key areas like country capacity strengthening (CCS), resilience, social protection and emergency response and somewhat affected WFP strategic positioning.

3 CSP results chain proved helpful in clarifying intended causal pathways but unintentionally contributed to siloed approaches and fragmented strategic outcomes management in the CSPs. Siloed management brought about several critical shortcomings in CSP implementation, including reduced synergies and cross-fertilization across programming areas, limited multisectoral engagements, and inefficiencies in the use of staff time.

GOOD PRACTICES

In **Bangladesh**, efforts to establish linkages between emergency response and long-term resilience have been made through the rice fortification interventions in the response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, through livelihoods support for the host population, and through the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy project jointly conducted by WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

In **Cambodia**, the CSP strategic framework organized around three pillars provided a conducive framework in terms of programming content, bringing about more coherence across the strategic outcomes. However, its siloed nature hampered cross-fertilization among the various outcome areas.

4 WFP strategic positioning in the region was generally relevant for contributions across the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. Partners' and donors' perceptions of WFP's comparative advantages in humanitarian emergency preparedness and response brought about increased funding for humanitarian action and fewer investments in development and peacebuilding focused activities. This, along with the lack of corporate indicators for peacebuilding results, minimizes the potential visibility of WFP's contributions and is hindering WFP efforts to position itself as a key actor in the 'changing lives' agenda.

GOOD PRACTICES

In **Nepal** the integration of emergency assistance and multidimensional CCS efforts helped to address the humanitarian-development nexus. The introduction of forecast-based financing reflects WFP's efforts to build links between preparedness, response and long-term resilience and development activities.

In **Lao People's Democratic Republic**, the country office was able to establish some innovative links between humanitarian and development work, such as a campaign to promote the use of cash-based transfers to support dietary diversity and nutrition.

In the **Philippines**, WFP contributed positively to peacebuilding under the umbrella of its work in food security and nutrition in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). It did so by integrating a conflict-sensitivity assessment into the design of new initiatives to identify potential risks of inter- and intra- community conflicts, with attention to improving local social cohesion.

5 WFP's shift in role - from implementer to enabler - was not consistently achieved in all the CSPs. This was due to several factors, including constrained national capacity at institutional level, and limited ownership of WFP programmes from government counterparts, sub-optimal staffing and organizational arrangements at country office level and lack of a partnership strategy.

GOOD PRACTICES

The **Kyrgyz Republic** CSP introduced a social protection framework which transitioned WFP from an implementation role to an enabling role, providing technical assistance and strengthening government capacities.

6 Through the CSPs, WFP established and strengthened trusted and long-term partnerships, with varying degrees of engagement from government, UN and civil society partners. Elevation of government partnerships to a more strategic level requires operational and structural changes. UN partnerships are insufficiently operationalized by joint programming.

GOOD PRACTICES

In **India**, working closely with national and state governments to identify strategic opportunities for CCS enabled WFP to make positive contributions to the achievement of SDG 2. WFP used its expertise to influence the supply of and demand for quality foods and to address institutional challenges and capacity gaps. Strong political commitment by governments to ending malnutrition as well as the trust established between state governments and WFP have contributed to enhancing the impact of CSP interventions.

The Government of **Sri Lanka** is WFP's long-standing principal strategic partner, and this key partnership underpins the CSP design and implementation. While WFP interacts with various ministries at national and district levels, it mainly worked with the Government's Project Management Unit. This was found to be an efficient approach because it helped coordinate the CSP implementation across several Government agencies.

Whilst most of the CSPs did not invest a lot in establishing partnerships with the private sector, **Tajikistan** undertook steps towards a stronger collaboration with the private sector, especially in relation to local fortification of wheat flour and local production of specialized nutritious foods for 6-59-month-old children.

7 WFP's alignment to and integration with national institutional systems supports effectiveness and sustainability of interventions. Government ownership of results and government commitments to allocate financial and human resources to WFP programmes are critical success factors.

GOOD PRACTICES

In **Bhutan**, systemized generation of reliable data was mainstreamed into strategic and operational government decision-making processes, becoming a key element in WFP CCS support across all sectors covered under the CSP.

The **Timor Leste** CSPE highlights that WFP made an important contribution to strengthening the supply chain for medical supplies at the central government level through improvements to systems and procedures. However, WFP underestimated the scale of the organizational capacity strengthening required and the range of skills that WFP staff required to achieve long-lasting and sustainable change.

8 Underfunding, financial uncertainty, and the short nature of commitments are distinguishing challenges for most first generation CSPs. The continued dominance of donor earmarking outweighs the CSP Policy's original intention to further strengthen programming flexibility and adaptiveness.


9 Sub-optimal staffing structures pose risks to CSP implementation and sustainability. WFP staff faced challenges in adjusting to the new CSP structures, encompassing diverse interventions across the nexus, in an environment characterized by constrained resources.


10 Evidence generation is recognized as a key WFP strength by partners. WFP strategic positioning in the development sphere and areas like CCS is, however, somewhat limited by weaknesses in the corporate monitoring and reporting frameworks.

GOOD PRACTICES




In **Indonesia**, the expansive nature of government requests for vulnerability analysis and mapping systems in food security and emergency preparedness and response support beyond the original agreements suggested that government partners saw potential for WFP to engage holistically in multiple sectors within their areas of expertise.


KEY INSIGHTS AND ISSUES FOR CORPORATE CONSIDERATION

 Several corporate requirements set out in the WFP Policy on Country Strategic Plans and in the Integrated Road Map (or the lack thereof) have unintentionally worked against the **holistic and integrated approach** foreseen by the same CSP Policy.

 To guarantee **CSPs are contextually relevant**, adaptive and able to tell a story about intended change, WFP Management should ensure, at design stage, that CSP formulation is broad enough to cater for substantial changes at programmatic level driven by changes in the evolving context, while clearly defining the results chain, including linkages across the triple nexus, and underlying assumptions for each programmatic area.

 As WFP Management engages in the **design, implementation and resourcing of second and third generation CSPs**, it is critical WFP:

-  re-assesses the key issues that slowed down the expected shift from implementer to enabler during the previous CSP(s).
-  continues advocating WFP's mandate across the humanitarian-development nexus.
-  adopts integrated staffing and organizational structures within country and sub-offices.

 Actions should be undertaken to offset the **financial and management risks** coming from shortcomings in the CSP architecture and excessive emphasis placed on activities in corporate systems.

BREADTH OF EVIDENCE

This summary brings together evidence from WFP CSPEs in 13 different countries in the region over the period 2018-2023. It offers findings that are critical to inform ongoing and future planning and draws out key insights for corporate consideration. All evaluations were rated 'satisfactory' or above by WFP's external Post-hoc Quality Assessment.

The summary applied the approach and methods set out in WFP's technical note on summaries of evaluation evidence, namely:

- A universe of 13 WFP independent evaluations was collected, which all included information on design and implementation of CSPs.
- Evidence was systematically extracted from the evaluations using an analytical framework reflecting key areas of interest identified at framing stage. Additional complementary and reinforcing evidence was extracted from the Evaluation of WFP's Policy on CSPs and from the Executive Director Information memorandum on recurring findings, lessons and recommended changes prepared by OEV in November 2023 and February 2024.
- Evidence was analysed and clustered around three focus areas and related sub-themes with key patterns and findings identified.



The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.

ANNEX ■ LIST OF EVALUATIONS CONSULTED

- Bangladesh CSPE (2016-2019)
- Bhutan CSPE (2019-2023)
- Cambodia CSPE (2019-2023)
- India CSPE (2019-2022)
- Indonesia CSPE (2017-2020)
- Kyrgyz Republic CSPE (2018-2022)
- Lao People's Democratic Republic CSPE (2017-2021)
- Nepal CSPE (2018-2023)
- Pakistan CSPE (2018-2022)
- Philippines CSPE (2018-2022)
- Sri Lanka CSPE (2018-2022)
- Tajikistan CSPE (2019-2024)
- Timor-Leste CSPE (2018-2020)

WFP EVALUATION

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