



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of WFP Rwanda Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023)

CONTEXT

A land-locked mountainous country in east-central Africa, Rwanda is home to 13.7 million people. In recent years, Rwanda has achieved positive development outcomes in poverty reduction, gender equality, environmental sustainability, education and public health, facilitated by economic growth and structural reforms. The country remains prone to natural hazards, health-related challenges and food insecurity. A UN “Delivering as One” pilot country since 2008, Rwanda has a UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) running until the end of 2024.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP) for Rwanda 2019-2023 was approved in November 2018, and subsequently extended until the end of 2024 to align with the UNSDCF planning cycle. It was preceded by the WFP Country Programme (CP) 2013-2018, which marked the beginning of a shift in engagement for WFP towards working alongside Government to strengthen capacity in food security and nutrition.

The Rwanda CSP was framed around five strategic objectives (SOs) that all integrated capacity strengthening dimensions. It continued existing activities, like food and cash assistance to refugees, expanded others, like strengthening smallholder farmers’ access to markets, and introduced new areas of work, like disaster-risk reduction and management (DRRM) within the social protection umbrella. The fifth SO was added in 2019 to provide support to national partners on humanitarian response in times of crises.

As of June 2023, the Rwanda CSP was 57 percent funded, with a total budget of USD 156,551,104, allocated 56.8 percent to crisis response, resilience building (32.3 percent) and root causes (10.9 percent).

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the independent Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning and to inform the design of the next CSP in Rwanda. It covers all WFP activities implemented from 2019 to mid-2023.

Conducted between January and November 2023, the evaluation applied a theory-based approach using mixed methods and examined the relevance of WFP’s strategic positioning, its contribution to outcomes, its efficiency and the factors explaining its performance.

This evaluation is expected to be of particular use to the WFP country office (CO) in Rwanda and internal and external stakeholders, including beneficiaries.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

Extent to which the CSP is evidence-based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable

The WFP CSP had a strong focus on country capacity strengthening and an explicit commitment to the most vulnerable, aligned with Rwanda’s priorities. Recurrent shocks emphasized the continued relevance of WFP’s humanitarian role in Rwanda.

The CSP had a clear and integrated programme logic. A focus on collaboration and partnerships supported external coherence, though stakeholders perceived some overlaps in CSP priorities with other UN agencies.

WFP’s contribution to CSP strategic outcomes

Crisis response: WFP ensured access to adequate and nutritious food for the most vulnerable refugees and returnees through cash-based transfers (CBT), targeted nutrition, supplementary food and school feeding. Resource gaps, however, caused ration cuts over the period, sometimes significant, which may explain why refugee households did not meet their targeted nutrition levels. Still, there was a reduction in reliance on negative-coping strategies, suggesting that food and cash transfers, school feeding and supplementary feeding provided effective safety nets.

In its assistance to refugees, WFP’s shift from food to CBT supported autonomy, inclusion, cost- efficiency and local markets. Refugees working jointly on projects and the bringing together of host and refugee community children in schools fostered positive effects on social cohesion. In contrast, inconsistent assistance packages across refugee groups caused some social tensions. The CSP’s ambitions to support refugee self-reliance were not achieved, challenged by limited livelihood opportunities and access to land, and curtailed by funding constraints.

When crises hit (Ebola, COVID-19 or flooding), WFP provided timely support to the Government, counting on an effective supply chain service.

Resilience building: With partners, WFP contributed to strengthening national social protection systems and capacities, integrating disaster-risk management (DRM), for which it also supported a national policy update. WFP supported the

introduction of national preparedness plans and strengthened national institutions' evidence-generation capacities.

At community level, beneficiaries enhanced their knowledge of climate-related shock mitigation and showed progress in food consumption and productive assets, increasing women's involvement in decision-making.

Home-grown school feeding schemes supported by WFP had positive effects on education, nutrition and gender equality. Stimulated by WFP-supported school feeding programmes, the adoption of a national scheme in 2021 extended access to adequate and nutritious food to all school-going children in Rwanda. WFP's subsequent support focused on policy, strategic and accountability aspects and related capacity strengthening. WFP's support to small-holder farmers generated positive agricultural and economic outcomes and progress was noted in cooperative financing and management, and in connecting farmers to buyers, though there is room for improvement. Missed opportunities were noted in advocating for nutrient-rich foods and enhancing supply chain and retail systems. Important areas of SO4 results are not captured by monitoring systems.

Root causes: WFP contributed to the adoption of a national score card system for the surveillance of children at risk of malnutrition. The successful mainstreaming of nutrition across the CSP and integration of Social and Behaviour Change Communication within several intervention types were important achievements and resulted in the diversification of diets of vulnerable populations. Still, progress against targeted results on nutrition under SO3 remained modest, due to resourcing challenges limiting the scope of engagement.

Cross-cutting dimensions and sustainability

The CSP's ambitions to produce gender transformative results were partially met, with notable women empowerment results, but insufficient resources and capacity support constrained results. Attention to disability inclusion was very modest.

Complaint and feedback mechanisms covered most beneficiaries, with gaps amongst refugees, and evidence that feedback has informed programme adjustments.

Though WFP has enhanced attention to environment and climate change by implementing a dedicated strategy, efforts remain modest compared to the environmental challenge in Rwanda and performance is not measured sufficiently.

CSP progress on institutional sustainability has been strong and supported by a growing attention to CCS, whereas social, financial and environmental sustainability was weaker.

WFP's efforts towards the integration of refugees, DRRM and social protection contributed to the humanitarian-development nexus. It adhered well to humanitarian principles overall.

WFP's timeliness and efficient use of resources

WFP delivery was generally timely, supported by using cash or digital delivery modalities and effective supply chain and logistics functions. However, funding challenges and contracting delays hampered implementation efficiency.

WFP's targeting strategies were evidence-based and refugees' vulnerability-based targeting was generally successful, though residual errors were noted. The scale of WFP work remains modest compared to needs of vulnerable persons.

Cost-efficiency was well served by a shift to cash transfers, use of cascade training, and some strategic partnerships, although it was not tracked. UN joint programmes have not produced the

expected efficiency gains and duplication of monitoring effort between WFP and cooperating partners undermined efficiency.

Factors that explain WFP performance

While retaining its donor base, a lack of donor diversity and heavy earmarking, compounded by insufficient fundraising capacity, hampered CSP resourcing and affected performance, especially under SO1 and SO3.

M&E systems were not set up to capture some outcomes, especially on CCS; and M&E data feedback loops into programmatic improvement need to be improved.

Partnerships were expanded with national institutions including those decentralized and with the private sector and cooperating partners, although inconsistently.

CO staff commitment and expertise is recognized, but profiles need to better match CSP needs, notably on CCS, gender and fundraising. Strong leadership and government support were conducive factors.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WFP's dual focus on saving lives and changing lives and enhanced enabler role has appropriately positioned WFP to work across the humanitarian-development nexus and remains strongly relevant.

The CSP delivered good results in relation to social safety nets and nutrition-sensitive food systems, and WFP responded well and flexibly to external shocks. However, limited funding capacities have represented a persistent constraint and remains a central challenge.

A well-integrated portfolio and strategic partnerships have served efficiency and CSP results. Attention to cross-cutting dimensions could be enhanced to further CSP results, especially on environment which has not matched needs in Rwanda.

WFP organizational structure, management and monitoring arrangements and staffing have not been optimally aligned with the needs of the CSP.

Recommendation 1. Maintain a dual focus on saving lives and changing lives for the next CSP, ensuring adequate support to refugee self-reliance and appropriate linkages across the portfolio.

Recommendation 2. Continue to pursue a multi-pronged CCS approach, informed by a corresponding strategy, well-defined expected outcomes and enhanced monitoring.

Recommendation 3. Strengthen WFPs organizational readiness for delivery of the next CSP.

Recommendation 4. Strengthen WFP approach to disability inclusion across the portfolio and upscale the focus on gender in all WFP work.

Recommendation 5: Significantly upscale the focus on environmental and climate change across all domains of the next CSP with attention to preparedness, mitigation and adaptation, and continue to reduce the carbon footprint of WFPs work in Rwanda.

Recommendation 6: Ensure sustainability considerations are mainstreamed across the portfolio in a balanced manner starting at the design phase and give enhanced emphasis to partnerships and funding alternatives against set ambitions.