



WFP EVALUATION

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Summary Evaluation Report

Baseline Evaluation of the WFP McGovern-Dole funded School Feeding programme in the Republic of Congo 2021 to 2026

INTRODUCTION

The World Food Programme (WFP) Republic of Congo Country Office received US\$25 million from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Services (FAS) to fund a five-year project under the McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program (hereafter referred to as "McGovern-Dole") for the period 2021–2026. The funding represents the fifth round for the program and second award to WFP. The McGovern-Dole project seeks to improve pupils' health and dietary practices, reduce pupils' short-term hunger through the provision of school meals, raise pupils' literacy levels, and strengthen government's and schools' administrative capacities to implement and manage a nutrition sensitive and holistic school feeding program.

The baseline evaluation was conducted by independent evaluators from Oversee Consulting Group and data collection took place from 17th May to 5th June 2023.

SUBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

The baseline study focused on the implementation of the McGovern-Dole WFP school feeding program in the Republic of Congo from October 2021 to 30 September 2026. Two strategic objectives (SO) are sought by this project and contribute to the objectives of the school feeding program:

- Improve literacy among school-aged children (SO1);
- Improve health and dietary practices (SO2).

USDA also considers one more strategic objective of the project:

- Improve effectiveness of food assistance through local and regional procurement (LRP SO1)

The following are the specific objectives:

- Improve attentiveness, increase attendance, reduce dropout, and alleviate short term hunger of school children through the provision of school meals;

- Improve health and dietary practices through infrastructure improvements, as well as awareness and behavioural change strategies around health, nutrition and diet through school and community interventions;
- Improve literacy capabilities of pupils, the quality of literacy instruction, and enhance school leadership capacity;
- Strengthen capacity of Government and school communities to manage and implement a nutrition sensitive and holistic school feeding program; and
- Support farmer groups to become reliable and sustainable suppliers of high-quality food commodities to local schools.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The baseline evaluation focused on the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and the indicators that will be used for monitoring and tracking results of activities that will be implemented to meet the aforementioned specific objectives of the project. The baseline was purposed to establish situational analysis before the beginning of the McGovern-Dole program FY21 and to develop learnings on the most efficient approach to monitor the program indicators in the PMP.

The evaluation objectives are meant to strengthen accountability and learning; and to inform WFP's operational and strategic decision-making.

APPROACH AND METHODS

The evaluation team followed a **participatory and consultative evaluation approach**, ensuring meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, especially girls and women and other vulnerable groups through capturing their different voices for use.

The overall evaluation used a **quasi-experimental longitudinal panel design** meant to track a cohort of schools and pupils in the program and in non-intervention areas over the project's life (2023-2026). The design was developed to simulate a **'before and after'** approach and a **with/ without** comparison.

The evaluation team employed a **concurrent design** for the systematic use of **mixed methods**. The **qualitative** research component was designed to provide an understanding of relationships, trends, and patterns emerging from the quantitative component.

KEY FINDINGS

BASELINE VALUES, APPROPRIATENESS AND TARGETS OF THE PMP INDICATORS

EVALUATION QUESTION 1

Q1A What are the baseline values for each indicator in the performance monitoring plan?

Q1B Are the indicators appropriate for measuring the results of the program?

Q2A Based on the stated objectives of the project, are the targets set for each indicator clear, realistic, and achievable considering the baseline?

Many of indicators are SMART in that they are understandable, easy to calculate, time-bound, appropriate to measure the program results and are well aligned with the results framework. However, **some of them do not match the activity** envisaged thereby introducing a risk of inconsistency between the activity reports and the indicators if the monitoring system is not rigorously developed to facilitate data collection directly linked to the selected indicators. **Some of the indicators are redundant**, and some are not realistic within the context or have been formulated in such a way that they will be difficult to measure.

Considering that stakeholders in the key informant interviews highlighted the difficulties in monitoring the **28 standard and 8 custom indicators** in the McGovern-Dole FY17 project due to the workload it created, it is important to review the number of indicators (**27 standard, 6 LRP and 26 custom indicators**) in the McGovern-Dole FY21 significantly downwards. Some of the custom indicators are not directly linked to the project activities or are linked at a very micro level. The added value of monitoring those indicators would likely be outweighed by the inefficiencies that may be introduced into the M&E system by over-burdening it with non-critical indicators.

Overall, **McGovern-Dole FY21 has carefully selected and designed gender-sensitive indicators** that will enable the assessment of the project's interventions' impact on various target groups. Nonetheless, **the project lacks important equity-focused indicators** that take into account significant social components that differentiate contexts, needs, and obstacles among the diverse target populations. For example, the project does not consider indicators related to ethnicity, which would enable measuring its impact on indigenous populations. Although the project primarily targets rural areas, some intervention schools are

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situated in urban or peri-urban settings. However, the current indicator disaggregation does not reflect school location (rural, urban, or peri-urban), which should be considered to capture contextual differences across implementation sites.

Indicator baseline values frequently differed from that in the PMP but without much consequence. **A variation of importance relates to Standard Indicator 1 - the PMP indicated a baseline of 50 percent for girls and boys who, by the end of two grades of primary schooling, demonstrate that they can read and understand the meaning of grade level text, but the survey sample displayed lower proficiency in reading, with girls significantly outperforming the boys ($p=0.05$). The baseline values for the project intervention schools are 26.7 percent girls; 21.9 percent boys.**

EVALUATION QUESTION Q2B

How is the theory of change/logic design aligned with the result framework?

ALIGNMENT OF THE PROGRAM THEORY WITH THE RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The results framework uses evidence-based principles in the design of the project and the critical assumptions of the ToC are clearly outlined. **The logic of the ToC illustrated in the results framework is structurally sound and plausible with linkages showing the pathway of achievement of outcomes.** The plausibility of the elements highlighted in the results framework is largely supported by evidence of the stakeholders' common understanding of the program objectives in the key informant interviews, and in part due to the level of integration of the programme across other sectors including health, WASH and agriculture.

The ToC has appropriate linkages across various elements and variables but **some linkages are too linear and do not adequately reflect the complexity presented by the context and the inter-relationships between some variables and issues.** For example, increased engagement with community is not linked with strengthened capacity of local actors but both are inter-related elements.

Additionally, increased meaningful engagement with community would also influence increased market participation of SHFs with diversified products given the intra-community dynamics that exists within the context.

The late start of the FY21 project will affect the achievement of targets even those initially realistic within the timeframe of the project. The project currently has three years to deliver on activities initially planned to be achieved over five years. Some targets also require alteration due to the survey baseline values (e.g., standard indicator 1).

Though the FY21 program does not yet have an illustrated theory of change (ToC), it is well aligned with the WFP global ToC for school feeding programs, and the program logic is clearly articulated in the results framework. **The ToC has a gender perspective which explicitly targets boys, girls, vulnerable children and women farmers. However, it does not specifically mention rural and indigenous populations.** To enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of the ToC, it would be advantageous to provide greater clarity on how women farmers are reflected in the program – while the ToC acknowledges women as a target population, it only mentions them at the impact level.

EVALUATION QUESTION Q3A

What are the key success factors for efficient and effective M&E of the program?

THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

Key factors for efficient and effective M&E of the program

A comprehensive literature review identified five key determinants of an effective monitoring and evaluation system namely: (i) budgetary allocation for M&E,^{1,2} (ii) data quality,^{3,4} (iii) technical capacity of the M&E team or department,⁵ (iv) leadership and (v) monitoring and evaluation information system.⁶ Several of these factors were identified from the desk review and key informant

¹ Kamau, C.G., Mohamed, H.B.: Efficacy of monitoring and evaluation function in achieving project success in Kenya: a conceptual framework. *Sci. J. Bus. Manag.* 3(3), 82 (2015)

² Mugambi, F., Kanda, E.: Determinants of effective monitoring and evaluation of strategy implementation of community-based projects. *Int. J. Innov. Res. Dev.* 2(11), 67–73 (2013). ISSN 2278-0211

³ Gudda, P.: *A Guide to Project Monitoring & Evaluation*. AuthorHouse, Bloomington (2011) 21.

⁴ Ile, I.U., Eresia-Eke, C., Allen-Ile, C.: *Monitoring and Evaluation of Policies, Programmes and Projects*. Van Schaik, Pretoria (2012)

⁵ Mulandi, N.M.: *Factors influencing performance of monitoring and evaluation systems of non-governmental organizations in governance: a case of Nairobi, Kenya*. University of Nairobi (2013)

⁶ Tengan, Callistus & Aigbavboa, Clinton & Thwala, Wellington. (2019). *Conceptual Description of the Key Determinants of Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System*. 10.1007/978-3-319-93882-0_12.

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interviews as fundamental to the success of the McGovern-Dole FY21 program. They include:

The use of a monitoring information system – **the existence of a program monitoring dashboard** was recognised as a strength of the M&E system. Consolidated data from all schools is available from the dashboard on a monthly basis.

Comprehensive information is collected regularly, despite the geographical accessibility difficulties of some schools. The M&E system aims to provide **comprehensive and relevant data that supports decision making**. In the current system, schools produce two main reports: a monthly report and a quarterly report.

EVALUATION QUESTION Q3B

What are the enabling or hindering factors for effective monitoring and evaluation of the programme?

The success of the program depends in part on the effectiveness and efficiency of the monitoring and evaluation system in place. It is based both on a mechanism for collecting and reporting data, the ability to document the various indicators based on available data.⁷ Thus, a number of factors can facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of the programme's monitoring and evaluation system.

Factors that hinder the effective monitoring and evaluation of the program

- **Insufficient capacity of stakeholders (school principals**, National Directorate of School Feeding (DAS) officials) to understand their role and to play them appropriately in the implementation of the programme, including the delay in transmitting monthly canteen monitoring reports to WFP.
- Interviews and the desk review also indicate that **currently, the dashboard is not fully used as a tool for implementing the programme as originally designed**. Therefore, there is a need to improve communication and information sharing between different stakeholders.
- WASH and literacy indicators are not measured via the dashboard. As such, **better collaboration with UNICEF and UNESCO could help create a synergy of data on WASH, literacy** and other activities.

- Though data is disaggregated by sex, **it is not really analysed to inform gender sensitive programming**. Factors that hinder the M&E system from achieving its gender sensitive and equity objectives include the lack of disaggregation by ethnicity and the difficulty in reaching women in some communities.

Factors that enable the effective monitoring and evaluation of the program

Stakeholders in the interviews reported that **WFP's awareness-raising of stakeholders has made it possible to provide information on the indicators to facilitate their appropriation**. In addition, the organization of regular meetings with WFP was highlighted as helpful in facilitating the proper functioning of the monitoring and evaluation system, as they provide a space to quickly address challenges and agree on solutions.

The meetings also allow a rapid escalation of problems to the appropriate function within the system, if they are held regularly and if a mechanism for escalating difficulties is effectively functional. However, if these actions are only carried out at the central level, field actors who are directly involved in data collection and the production of monthly and quarterly reports face difficulties.

The strengthening of the monitoring system was recommended by the stakeholders in the key informant interviews to ensure its effectiveness in responding to problems encountered, and in decision-making. Currently, the dashboard is not acting as a program implementation tool as it was originally designed.

EVALUATION QUESTION Q3C

What factors could impact on the reliability and accessibility of monitoring and evaluation data?

Factors that could impact the reliability and accessibility of M&E data

The reliability of monitoring data depends on how effective and regular field missions are as well as the consistent review of management reports. Given the experience of key actors in implementing interventions during the **McGovern-Dole FY17, lessons learned can help overcome challenges to facilitate the reliability of monitoring and evaluation data**. Overall, interviews with stakeholders indicate that they have knowledge of the indicators and data

⁷ OECD, Kusek, Jody Zall– Ten steps to a results-based monitoring and evaluation system: a handbook for development practitioners 1952. ISBN 0-8213-5823-5

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to be collected, although capacity-building needs have been expressed to ensure that they have good ownership of the process.

The use of data should be systematic in capacity building to better assess the situation by all actors at different levels and to promptly take corrective action. It is also a way to strengthen the motivation of managers by knowing their performance.

It is particularly important to improve the monitoring and evaluation capacity of the School Feeding Service (SAS). In addition, the continued involvement and devolution of education inspectors in their work would help the M&E system to function better. Although the SAS are paid a salary, they do not receive transport allowances and as a result, they do not always work, making the system non-functional at times.

EVALUATION QUESTION 4

Q4A To what extent the environment in the implementation area conducive to learning and child development for boys, girls and indigenous children?

Q4B What factors make the environment more or less conducive for learning?

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE ENVIRONMENT IS CONDUCTIVE FOR LEARNING AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Factors relating to the school environment

The school-based surveys, the FGDs and the key informant interviews highlighted several factors which render the school environment challenging for learning in the targeted departments. According to the interviews, **autochthone children are the most affected by a lack of school feeding as they do not attend school when school feeding is not available.** Information gathered from the school directors' survey showed that 10,012 pupils, the most from Bouenza and Pool departments, received at least one meal a day. These beneficiaries include 46 children living with disabilities and 718 autochthone children.

Poor conditions of the school and classroom environments were highlighted as constraints to a conducive learning environment. These include **lack of fences** (which has security implications and allows **intrusion of people** from outside the school into the school grounds during classes; **lack of bench tables and chairs**; and **insufficient number of classrooms** leading to **overcrowding** and the use of **multigrade classrooms** (7

out of 10 schools surveyed). These views were supported by findings in the survey. The proportion of schools with a fence was lower in the treatment group (7.8 percent) than in the comparison group (14.3 percent). The Sangha sample had the highest proportion unlike Bouenza and Plateaux which had no school with a fence. USDA assistance provided support to the Sangha schools.

Poor infrastructure and insufficient amenities in the schools were highlighted by stakeholders in the interviews including **insufficient water points and separate latrines** in schools which affected children's enrolment and learning, especially girls. Furthermore, **most schools were perceived as not suitable to receive children with disabilities** due to lack of physical installations and appropriate pedagogical methods.

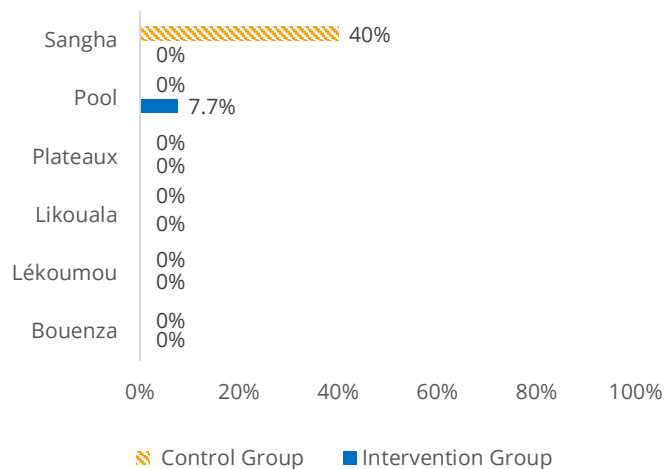


Most of the schools in the sample did not have electricity (Figure 1). Two percent of the schools in the intervention group had an electrical connection compared to 5.7 percent in the comparison group. This proportion was highest in Sangha (40 percent) in the control group and Pool (7.7 percent) in the intervention group. Bouenza, Lekoumou, Likouala, and Plateaux had no schools in the sample with electricity.

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Figure 1: Percentage of schools with electricity by department and group



Source: [USDA McGovern-Dole School Feeding Programme in the Republic of Congo \(2021-2026\) Baseline Report](#)

Similarly, **many of the schools did not have a functional drinking water point**. The proportion of schools with a functional drinking water point was relatively higher in the intervention group (11.8 percent) compared to the comparison group (8.6 percent). The high proportion (60 percent) observed in the Sangha was the result of USDA support which enabled the construction of several drinking water points.

Factors relating to the teacher

Teacher-related factors that influence learning include the availability of trained and qualified teachers, seniority, remedial methods used, and teaching methods.⁸

Poor availability of qualified teachers paid by the government was highlighted as an important factor. Stakeholders perceived that over 60 percent of teachers are recruited as volunteers without initial training – resulting in poor quality of teaching and poor learning outcomes in basic subjects. In many of the schools visited during data collection, the headteacher was the only government official, and the other teachers were volunteers.

Teachers' professional experiences and practices were explored in the survey: **46.1 percent and 46.4 percent of the teachers in the intervention group and comparison group respectively had the Baccalaureate as their highest academic qualification**. Only 7.9 percent and 14.4 percent of the teachers in the intervention group and

comparison group respectively had a university degree. Others (46 percent and 39 percent in the intervention group and comparison group respectively) had lower certification than the Baccalaureate.

The **mixed method, combining syllabic and global methods, is the most frequently utilized teaching strategy**, according to the survey responses from the teachers. It was employed somewhat more frequently in the comparison group (52 percent) than in the intervention group (43 percent). The syllabic method is in second position and the global method in third position, although the latter is more recurrent in the intervention group. There was no significant difference between the groups.

More than 84 percent of teachers in the survey believed that pupils' reading comprehension is guaranteed for at least 50 percent of the time. **Such a disparity between perceived reading activities and the effective assessment of competences calls for further pedagogical measures** to raise the level of pupils in the language, despite the use of the syllabic approach and the irregular preparation of lessons by teachers (almost 30 percent of teachers still prepare lessons).



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⁸ PASEC 2019 Quality Of Education Systems In French-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa Teaching/Learning Performance And Environment In Primary Education

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Factors relating to the student

The **Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)** results revealed relatively low levels of reading proficiency.



The lack of reading and maths books for pupils is a constraint reported in the FGDs and observed in the school surveys. The textbook possession rate was very low in the intervention group but was relatively higher in the comparison group. On average six children in a class used the appropriate textbooks during the observed language lesson sequence in the intervention group compared to 14 children in the comparison group. There were also strong disparities between departments. The departments of Bouenza, Likouala, Plateaux in the intervention group showed a zero-possession rate.

The low participation of parents in the learning process of children due to illiteracy, inhibits their support for learning, especially at home. As a result, many of the children do not regularly use the language of instruction. Moreover, in several rural localities, pupils do not always receive support and accompaniment from their parents at home concerning the revision of lessons. **Conflicts between domestic or agricultural activities and school activities can also be a major constraint**, regardless of how important parents believe school education is.

EVALUATION QUESTION Q4C

To what extent is education considered important by parents and communities for both boys and girls?

Extent to which education is considered important by parents and communities

Evidence from FGDs reveals that **there is no explicit discriminatory discourse among both mothers and fathers. This positive finding is further reinforced by the FGDs conducted with girls and boys**, which mirror the

narratives of their parents. While marriage is still considered an important aspect of girls' future, the discussions indicate that studying and working are also emphasized in parents and children's narratives. Although the value of education for girls is sometimes linked to their ability to manage future households or find suitable husbands, overall, the discourse encourages girls' education. This indicates **a growing recognition of the value of education for girls, promoting equal opportunities and empowerment.**

In some rural communities, people did not have a positive perception of the opportunity of education for their children. This translated into low investment and support for their enrolment and retention, especially for girls. The context of vulnerability and poverty aggravates this situation. Nevertheless, there was consensus that children who attend schools with available canteens equally benefit from school meals.

EVALUATION QUESTION 5

Q5A To what extent are farmers, women's farmers cooperatives, traders, and other suppliers in the implementation area equipped (with skills, infrastructure, and inputs) and capable of providing a reliable and sustainable supply of high-quality food commodities to local schools?

Q5B How are farmers and women's farmer cooperative structured and organised?

CAPACITY AND ORGANIZATION OF FARMERS, WOMEN'S FARMERS COOPERATIVES, TRADERS, AND OTHER SUPPLIERS

As part of its strategy, WFP established around twenty farmer groups and worked to strengthen their administrative and financial capacities. WFP plans to source beans, fortified vegetable oil and fortified cassava flour locally from the smallholder farmers (SHFs) and private sector suppliers.

The reliance on subsistence farming and the limited capital investment in agriculture, trade and transport limits the sustained productive capacities of farmers during the school year as well as those of traders and suppliers. Evidence showed that the farmers, women's farmer cooperatives, traders and other suppliers in the implementation area are generally unaware of the challenges of the program and the need for their involvement in the process. Their participation appears to be driven primarily by economic factors, such as the need to sell their products and increase incomes. While they acknowledge the importance of the school feeding program

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for children, social considerations seem to be less important than economic ones.



FGDs with the farmers and traders revealed a plurality of difficulties that could ultimately discourage them. For instance, the women had the consensus that product prices need to be known in advance to motivate them. In the situation where they consider the pricing unreasonable, if they manage to find other flow circuits that may be more profitable for them, they can use them and, in this case, the program runs the risk of not surviving in those areas. **As indicated by some participants, the collaborative mechanism remains very precarious or very informal and puts suppliers in a vulnerable situation.** FGD participants indicated that it would have been preferable to identify a list of suppliers, contract them and agree on prices at the beginning of the cycle or at least for a given period given the fluctuation of food shortages in local markets.

Nevertheless, McGovern-Dole FY21's plans to enhance women's empowerment by increasing the capacities of local women farmers for local purchases in the school feeding program are supported by evidence, drawing on the success of similar past initiatives. This evidence suggests that the goals of increasing local purchases and empowering women can be achieved if structured and managed appropriately.

EVALUATION QUESTION 6

Q6A To what extent are the Government and school communities equipped with the relevant skills and capacity to manage and implement a nutrition-sensitive and holistic National School Feeding Program (NSFP)?

Q6B What are the current capacity gaps and strengths of the NSFP?

CAPACITY OF GOVERNMENT AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES TO MANAGE AND IMPLEMENT A NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AND HOLISTIC NATIONAL SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM

The Government has the legal and policy framework that are aligned with the national development policy agenda and provide an enabling institutional environment that takes agriculture, the food system, procurement, nutrition education and cross-cutting issues into account. WFP has supported this process over the years and will continue to support policy development in the McGovern-Dole FY21. **There is some evidence of improved capacities especially at the national level** to support the implementation of a nutrition-sensitive NSFP and the monitoring and evaluation system to support evidence-based analysis for learning and accountability. However, **there are important capacity gaps**, the most critical being the weak political will regarding the SFP and the low financial commitment towards the program.

Capacity building by WFP is perceived as insufficient at subnational levels which face many difficulties in the implementation of school canteens. The school communities that are involved in school feeding are the School Canteen Management Committees (COGES) and the Parents and Teachers Association (APE). In many schools, there is sometimes confusion in roles and responsibilities. Despite the sensitization efforts, parents who are members of the APEs are unaware of their roles. According to some parents in the FGDs, parent associations only play an observer role, but it is the management committee, of which some parents are members, that play the active role of checking the quality of food and diversifying food.

Activities needed to be undertaken to address capacity gaps

Based on the results of this evaluation, some of the activities that should be undertaken to address capacity gaps are highlighted below:

A capacity building plan is essential to fill the gaps identified in terms of coordination, management of human, material, relational and organizational resources, knowledge of the different actors at different levels. An appropriate communication plan should accompany the implementation of this capacity-building plan.

A system of motivation and recognition should be put in place for actors who work voluntarily in the program, particularly for women working in kitchens, which is the very heart of school canteens.

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The remuneration of cooks, who are primarily or exclusively women, should be considered as a strategy to enhance the capacity of schools to manage school feeding programs. Including provisions for remuneration to cooks should be a part of the advocacy efforts with the Government of Congo when developing NSF policies. **By recognizing the importance of fair compensation for cooks**, who often play a critical role in ensuring the success of school feeding initiatives, McGovern-Dole FY21 can contribute to strengthening the overall implementation and sustainability of these programmes and avoid the risk of widening gender gap in society, once women who serve voluntary as cook in schools miss their day of work in agriculture.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are some of the lessons that provide insights into how WFP and its implementing partners could improve programme implementation, the PMP and the M&E system.

- **Reducing the number of indicators would enable a more efficient M&E system for the program.**
- There is evidence of commitment of McGovern-Dole FY21 to enhance women farmers' capacities and promoting local women's empowerment, a commitment reflected in LRP indicators 11 and 12, which explicitly target women farmers.
- McGovern-Dole FY21 also demonstrates its commitment to **promoting girls' school attendance** and retention by incorporating capacity building for Menstrual Hygiene Management practices into its framework.
- **EGRA and EGMA made it possible to detect weak aptitudes of pupils at this level for the tasks** to which they were subjected.

- **It is important to point out the contributory role of the McGovern-Dole project on literacy outcomes.** There are many factors relating to the school environment, teachers and pupils; and factors outside the school, in particular the overall governance of the education system and the national budget for education - that are outside the control of WFP.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

Many of the PMP indicators are appropriate but there is room for reformulation and removal of several indicators since some are redundant, and some are not realistic within the context or have been defined in such a way that they will be difficult to measure. While most indicators are disaggregated by gender, **it is important to restructure some indicators to be more equity-focused to enable measuring the project's impact on autochthone populations.**

The baseline displayed a high rate of attendance (over 80 percent) as anticipated by the PMP. However, literacy rates was low (26.7 percent girls; 21.9 percent boys). This weak performance coupled with high levels of attendance displays an important scope and **underscores the pertinence and the critical positioning of the McGovern-Dole FY21 literacy related interventions.**

The learning environment is challenging for the pupils and many of the issues are beyond the control of WFP. Nevertheless, **there was evidence that school feeding encouraged school enrolment and retention of girls and boys especially autochthone children.**

There is national capacity to implement a nutrition sensitive and holistic NSFP but the major deterrent is the weak political will and poor financial commitment of government towards school feeding.

Structured M&E capacity building during the McGovern-Dole FY17 was more effective at the national level than at the sub-national level. It is important to **address remaining capacity gaps and enhance data coordination with partners for a more efficient system for the FY21 project.**

The remuneration of cooks would contribute to strengthening the overall implementation and sustainability of the program and would contribute to the reduction of the gender gap within the context.

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ACRONYMS

APE	Parents and Teachers Association (Association des parents d'Elèves)
CO	Country Office
COGES	School canteen management committee (Comité de gestion des cantines scolaires)
DAS	National Directorate of School Feeding (Direction de l'Alimentation Scolaire)
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Services
FGDs	Focus group discussions
FY	Fiscal Year
LRP	Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NSF	National School Feeding
NSFP	National School Feeding Program
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co- operation and Development
RB	Regional Bureau
RoC	Republic of the Congo
SAS	School Feeding Service (Service de l'Alimentation Scolaire)
SHFs	Smallholder Farmers
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound
SMC	School Management Committees
SO	Strategic objectives
ToC	Theory of change
ToR	Term of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

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