



SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Evaluation of Uganda WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2025

CONTEXT

Uganda is a low-middle income country of 45.9 million people with high levels of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, and illiteracy. Over 42 percent of the population lives below the international poverty line, and 71.2 percent experience moderate or severe food insecurity. The Eastern and Northern regions, particularly Karamoja, are most affected, with child stunting reaching 41.1 percent.

Uganda also hosts over 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The Country Strategic Plan 2018-2025 (CSP) aimed to maintain WFP's emergency response capacity and support the Government in disaster preparedness and in hosting the growing number of refugees. The CSP comprised six strategic objectives and ten activities, balancing crisis response with efforts to build resilience, tackle malnutrition, and support national systems.

The CSP underwent eight budget revisions, increasing its budget from USD 1.24 to 1.99 billion. In addition, the refugee re-verification exercise in 2018 and other programmatic adjustments resulted in changes in the number of targeted beneficiaries from 3.34 million to 2.85 million. By 2023, 71.5 percent of the cumulative 2018-2023 needs-based plan (NBP) was resourced, with the US and UK accounting for more than a third of the contributions.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods and theory-based approach to assess WFP's strategic positioning, its contribution to strategic outcomes, efficiency in implementation, sustainability of CSP results, and the factors explaining performance.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the CSP was commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation and covered WFP's operations in Uganda from 2017 to mid-2024 with the main purpose of providing evaluation evidence for institutional accountability for the CSP results, and learning to inform the development of a new CSP.

The main intended users of the evaluation are the WFP country office in Uganda, the Eastern and Southern Africa regional office, technical divisions at headquarters in Rome, the Government of Uganda, the Executive Board, partner United Nations entities and donors. Other users include members of the civil society such as non-governmental organizations in Uganda and WFP's beneficiaries.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Strategic relevance and coherence

The CSP was aligned with national priorities, the UNSDCF, and key national and international refugee and development frameworks. WFP actively engaged in UN coordination structures and maintained strong partnerships at national and sub-national levels.

WFP demonstrated a shift over time towards evidence- and vulnerability-based targeting in the general food assistance for refugees, NutriCash, lean season responses, and school feeding.

However, there was still some variance in the consistency and precision of targeting across different programmes, with the criteria for selecting beneficiaries in asset creation and livelihood activities and agriculture and market support activities less clearly defined.

WFP made efforts to increase synergies between workstreams, integration across strategic objectives and activities. However, integration across strategic outcomes and activities remained a challenge. For example, there were no intentional links generated between crisis response, support to government on disaster preparedness, and supply chain and logistics.

The CSP design and implementation reflected WFP's comparative advantages in emergency response, logistics and food security and nutrition. WFP also leveraged its expertise on issues such as beneficiary information management to support to the national social protection systems, and is strategically positioned as a partner of choice in this area.

WFP adapted its operations in response to food distribution and safety incidents, shocks, refugee influxes, changes in the resourcing landscape, COVID-19 and ebola outbreaks. For example, WFP introduced a biometric registration system for general food assistance for refugees; adjusted general food assistance rations and extended the duration of blanket feeding for refugees; and provided additional support to the Government in public health emergencies.

Effectiveness and sustainability

WFP's Lean Season Responses contributed to improvements in food security and nutrition outcomes among supported vulnerable households. School feeding also supported better nutrition and dietary diversity. However, there was limited effect on food security and nutrition outcomes for refugees in the West Nile and Southwest regions.

The WFP shift to cash transfer had positive, direct and indirect, effects for refugees and host communities, including increased incomes, livelihood opportunities and spending flexibility for both food and non-food items. WFP's nutrition-sensitive interventions such as NutriCash and Social and Behavior Change Communication, contributed to improved knowledge and practices in dietary diversity, and financial literacy, especially among female refugees and host communities in West Nile and Southwest and food insecure and vulnerable populations in Karamoja.

WFP contributed to strengthened national and local capacities in shock-responsive social protection systems. WFP supported the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to enhance the National Identification cards system, and the establishment of the National Single Registry.

These positive effects are likely to be sustained, as evidenced by increased ownership by the national and subnational social actors. However, WFP is still learning how to act as a support to government through enabling actions as well as providing support through direct implementation.

The CSP made efforts to address cross-cutting issues such as gender, environment and accountability to affected populations, but a more systematic approach to these areas is required.

Efficiency

Most CSP activities were implemented on time and within budget, though operational and procurement challenges caused delays in programmes such as NutriCash, school feeding, and asset creation and livelihoods.

The shift to cash-based transfers improved cost efficiency and reduced operational burdens, despite some agency banking operational challenges such as limited cashflow at agent points and limited capacity of agents to address technological challenges.

Retail market engagement further supported more cost-effective assistance. WFP engagement activities helped retailers connect with banks and mobile money services, enhancing digital inclusion and business opportunities, such as with wholesalers, resulting in improved markets in refugee-hosting districts.

WFP maintained low post-delivery losses, but periodic pipeline breaks, driven by funding gaps, occasionally disrupted assistance and created negative effects on food and nutrition security outcomes, community social cohesion, household relations, and gender-based violence.

Key challenges

WFP's ability to achieve and sustain improved food security and nutrition outcomes was hampered by external and internal factors including funding shortfalls, earmarking of funding, COVID-19, food price volatility and increases in the needs of refugees and other vulnerable populations.

There are sustainability gaps in agricultural market support activities, where smallholder farmers continue to depend on WFP due to lack of linkages to larger markets. Likewise, the home-grown school feeding programme in Karamoja is heavily dependent on WFP funding.

WFP did not adequately draw on private sector partners to mobilize resources and establish operational synergies in the early years of the CSP.

The use of monitoring information for evidence-based management decision was limited by a lack of validity of some indicators, as well as inadequate staffing, and limited country office knowledge management capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1. Enhance programmatic integration and coherence across activities to maximize synergies and effectiveness.

Recommendation 2. Clearly define and strengthen WFP's role as an enabler of sustainable government capacity and systems, particularly in the areas of self-reliance, social protection (including school feeding and shock-responsive systems), nutrition, and food systems transformation.

Recommendation 3. Develop a more strategic and sustainable approach to partnerships, especially with government ministries, the private sector, and local organizations.

Recommendation 4. Improve the design and sustainability of resilience-building and self-reliance interventions for refugees and vulnerable populations.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen the advancement of cross-cutting priorities by establishing systematic approaches to gender responsiveness, environmental sustainability, and accountability to affected populations across all CSP activities.

Recommendation 6. Enhance WFP's thought leadership and catalytic role in food systems transformation through multisectoral engagement and innovative solutions.