



Evaluation of WFP Country Strategic Plan for Somalia (2022–2025)



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Context

Somalia faces a complex humanitarian context with ongoing conflict, chronic disasters, and climate change. Although a federal governance system was established in 2012, institutions remain nascent and fragmented, complicated by clan influence on governance structures.

Despite gains, Somalia experiences high levels of poverty and food insecurity ranking last (193/193) on the 2023 Human Development Index. It ranks 178 out of 185 for climate change vulnerability having experienced severe climatic events including the 2021–2023 drought which pushed 6.5 million people to crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity.

Protection and gender challenges are significant in Somalia. Humanitarian access is severely constrained by military operations, hostilities, and armed groups. With this, in 2024, 23 of 74 districts were hard to reach.

Objectives

The evaluation covered the WFP Somalia Interim Country Strategic Plan (ICSP) 2019–2021 and the current Country Strategic Plan (CSP) 2022–2025, including the emergency response to prevent famine between June 2022 and May 2023. The evaluation aimed to review progress and lessons learned from the current CSP to inform the development of the next CSP for WFP Somalia.

Subject and focus of the evaluation

The ICSP (2019–2021) and the CSP (2022–2025) were designed to prioritize response to humanitarian emergencies while also supporting long-term recovery and government capacity strengthening. The original ICSP (2019–2021) needs-based plan (NBP) was USD 961 million at design stage which was almost doubled to USD 1,982 over the course of the CSP. The budget was revised 5 times during implementation to be able to scale up WFP's response to the 2021 drought.

The United States is the primary donor to the CSP, followed by World Bank funding through the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) for national safety net projects.

Key evaluation findings

Relevance and strategic positioning

The CSP was designed to leverage WFP's expertise in emergency response, to support government priorities, and complement work of other agencies in Somalia. The CSP successfully positioned WFP to address both food security and nutrition needs, introducing linkages between relief, early recovery, and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In practice, operationalizing the CSP was challenging given the high level of need and insufficient donor funding across all areas of the CSP.

Targeting and prioritization

Prioritization efforts were appropriately directed toward regions and communities experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity. WFP undertook appropriate measures to reach the most food-insecure populations in Somalia, despite notable implementation challenges such as limited access to vulnerable groups, outdated population data, and complex political dynamics.

Emergency response

During the 2021–2022 drought in Somalia, WFP played a key role in helping prevent famine and worsening hunger. Through its CSP, WFP rapidly expanded emergency aid, reaching 9.7 million people in 2022 and 10.2 million in 2023 with food, nutrition, and cash support. This included displaced families and communities hit hardest by the prolonged drought and flooding. WFP's ability to respond quickly was made possible by early planning and preparedness built into the CSP.

Social protection

WFP was the Federal Government of Somalia's partner of choice for the implementation of the World Bank supported Shock Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project. WFP contributed to Somalia's social protection programming by supporting the government to provide cash transfers and capacity building, and developing the methodology for targeting the most vulnerable households. The social protection system was handed over to the Federal Government in 2024. Despite achievements, limited funding

available meant that the cash transfers provided by the programme were too small to significantly improve food security for participating households.

School feeding and nutrition programming

Due to funding constraints and logistical challenges, the School Feeding Programme reached only a small portion of eligible children. Implementation of the program was complicated by inconsistent food procurement and varying implementation methods across schools. WFP's malnutrition prevention and treatment programs achieved improved recovery and reduced mortality/ non-response/default rates. However, not all outcomes were achieved (e.g. dietary diversity) and the appropriateness of the programme was affected by fluctuation in funding.

Resilience

WFP aimed to support resilient food systems and enhance farmers' market access through Food for Assets and Food for Training programmes. Participants reported positive changes, including the ability to negotiate better prices and more consistent access to stable markets, including via the school feeding programme. However, availability of funding limited the number of households involved, and programme achievements were constrained by logistical challenges such as unreliable transportation and insufficient access to credit for programme participants.

National capacity strengthening

WFP bolstered capacities of federal and state institutions, working to fill human and financial resource gaps within federal and state entities. A key achievement was the development of the Unified Social Registry. Although WFP aimed to focus its capacity strengthening efforts in specific sectors, in practice, initiatives were not based upon clear strategies to ensure sustainability without WFP's support. WFP also spread its resources thinly, across multiple initiatives, hindering sustainable outcomes.

Contribution to cross-cutting aims

Despite dedicated mechanisms and efforts to integrate protection, accountability to affected people, and gender equality and women's empowerment, and disability inclusion in programming, protection risks due to conflict and social and cultural barriers constrained the effectiveness of WFP's efforts. Notwithstanding significant challenges, WFP adhered to humanitarian principles through providing targeted aid to vulnerable people, conducting impartial needs assessments, engaging with diverse local partners to mitigate perceptions of bias, and ensuring transparent communication of criteria for partner selection.

Efficiency considerations

WFP was able to respond quickly to meet the needs of those affected by the 2021 drought. WFP's response was expedited by robust delivery systems, partner networks, beneficiary pre-registration, and decentralized planning. However, WFP experienced some delays in deploying staff for the operational scale-up and in registering new beneficiaries. WFP took measures to reduce operational and transaction costs such as expanding the use of cash, consolidating warehousing, refining internal processes, and working more efficiently with partners.

Risk management

WFP Somalia, identified as a high-risk operation in WFP's Global Assurance Project, demonstrated an intensified approach to risk-management over the CSP implementation period. The country office strengthened risk management through a dedicated unit, partner vetting, and enhanced monitoring to combat aid diversion. Government engagement helped sustain donor trust amid persistent security, access, and infrastructure challenges.

Partnerships

WFP's strategic and operational partnerships established during the CSP were appropriate, well-aligned with mandates and roles, and critical for achievement of the CSP results. Collaboration with local NGOs was vital for reaching communities and distributing aid. WFP worked closely with governments at state and federal level which enhanced humanitarian coordination and the roll out of social protection systems. While limited, private sector engagement boosted financial inclusion and supported local economies through partnerships with retailers and financial service providers. WFP also collaborated with other UN agencies, but differing operational processes and resource competition hindered their ability to maximize joint programming opportunities.

Human and financial resources

The Country Office aligned its structure and staffing with the CSP and local context, securing strong funding for relief and safety net programs. However, limited donor commitment to longer-term initiatives like school feeding and resilience hindered integration and triple nexus goals. WFP Somalia took steps to improve operations and oversight by relocating its office to Mogadishu, and decentralizing operations to field and area offices, recruiting Somali staff, and investing in workforce development initiatives.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Strengthen linkages in the implementation of relief to resilience/livelihood building; and capacity strengthening.

Recommendation 2. Ensure the needs-based plan is informed by realistic resourcing assumptions, scenario planning, and realistic resource mobilization strategy.

Recommendation 3. Improve programme design and adaptation based on better integrated analysis and use of monitoring data.

Recommendation 4. Align partnerships with the requirements of the next CSP to ensure clarity on partnerships.

Recommendation 5. Ensure the government capacity-strengthening approach is based on clearly articulated objectives and defined targets.