



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Evaluation of Nepal WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023

CONTEXT

Nepal is a mountainous country with an ethnically diverse, predominantly rural (79 percent) population of 29.1 million. Physical access constraints, natural disasters and Covid-19 are underlying determinants for continued food insecurity amongst vulnerable populations. Chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies remain major health concerns. The Government of Nepal places a strong emphasis on reducing poverty and food insecurity as defined in its 14th and 15th three-year national development Plans.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

WFP has operated in Nepal since 1964. The Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan in 2018 brought former activities together under a single umbrella, aiming for intensified support to strengthen national capacities to respond to natural disasters, as well as providing school feeding, nutrition and livelihoods support.

The Nepal Country Strategic Plan (CSP), covering the period 2019–2023 focused on crisis response; nutrition; emergency preparedness and response; resilience-building; country capacity strengthening; and service provision to partners, under six strategic outcomes (SOs).

Support was provided through direct assistance, country capacity strengthening (CCS) to the Government and service delivery to humanitarian actors. The CSP underwent five budget revisions since 2019, increasing the CSP's budget to meet additional needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and monsoon-related floods. As of July 2022, CSP budget totaled USD 165.2 million and was 66 percent funded.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was conducted between April 2022 and February 2023, to inform the design of the next CSP in Nepal. It covers WFP activities implemented from 2019-mid 2022, and examines the relevance of WFP's strategic positioning, its contribution to outcomes, including on cross-cutting

priorities, its efficiency and the factors explaining its performance.

KEY FINDINGS

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

The evaluation found that CSP was based on a wide array of evidence sources and was well-aligned to people's needs, national priorities and Nepal's Sustainable Development Goal targets. Implementation modalities progressively aligned to an evolving context, including the changing governance environment. Support to disaster risk and food security monitoring capacity; the establishment of humanitarian staging areas for emergency response; and support to government social protection systems were highly relevant overall. WFP aligned to key United Nations frameworks in Nepal, though the full potential for coherence was not exploited.

The lack of an overarching Theory of Change and consequent limited interconnectedness across Strategic Outcomes, led to siloed approaches and weakened the transformative potential of the CSP.

Contribution to strategic outcomes

Crisis response: A dedicated Strategic Outcome 1 for a dormant crisis response proved helpful for swift activation when the conditions required, enabling rapid service delivery to affected populations and effective support to humanitarian partners. Nutrition messaging, the distribution of specialised nutritious foods and a clear outreach/targeting strategy all helped deliver positive outcomes for Blanket Supplementary Feeding activities. Outcomes were more modest for unconditional cash based transfers.

Resilience building: The construction and rehabilitation of local infrastructure helped strengthen resilience, and integrating climate-resilient agriculture and home-grown school feeding improved nutrition in schools.

However wider transformative gains were impeded by limited national absorptive capacity; COVID-19-related movement restrictions; and a focus on breadth rather than depth of coverage.

The provision of coordination support and logistical services during emergencies, as well as capacity strengthening for rapid emergency assessments, early warning and anticipatory actions was appreciated, as was WFP's longstanding support for the national food security monitoring system. However, full institutionalisation of capacity strengthening activities had not yet taken place.

Root causes: Outcomes for maternal & child health were mostly achieved, and Social Behavioural Change Communication activities proved effective. WFP-supported school meal activities achieved positive education and nutritional outcomes and facilitated handover of schools to government through technical assistance. Support to rice fortification incurred delays. Country capacity strengthening (CCS) interventions generated good results for policy support and strengthening of other normative frameworks, such as the formulation of rules and regulations for the Right to Food and Sovereignty Act and guidelines to scale-up nutrition.

Cross cutting issues

WFP activities adhered to humanitarian principles, and protection received adequate attention. WFP's complaint and feedback mechanism was increasingly applied by partners, though beneficiary awareness was limited.

Gender equality was comprehensively mainstreamed across design, implementation and monitoring. A focus on disability was however lacking.

Attention to environment protection principles was adequate but attention to climate change was not mainstreamed across all activities.

The CSP did not explicitly focus on the nexus, the integration of emergency assistance and multidimensional capacity strengthening efforts enhanced sustainability and helped bridge the continuum.

Timeliness and efficient use of resources

WFP's crisis response was timely, but delays arose elsewhere, due to pipeline breaks, natural disasters and slower than optimal local adoption of national policies and procedures.

The CSP had a well-justified cost structure and implemented cost savings, though some efficiency challenges ensued from internal silos.

Geographic targeting was consultative and evidence-based, focusing on those most in need, though coverage was ultimately based on resource availability, with prioritisation needed. Household and individual targeting were appropriate in reaching the most vulnerable, Food security needs in urban areas is an area for future attention.

Factors explaining WFP performance

WFP mobilized appropriate levels of resources for the CSP, but heavy activity-level earmarking impeded the achievement of resilience-building aims and monitoring activities. Extensive performance monitoring informed decision-making,

WFP partnered flexibly and openly with government and more strategic engagement with development partners is gaining traction. Partnerships with the private sector and academia are still emerging. Collaboration with cooperating partners remains insufficiently consultative. WFP's broad and stable staffing structure, with strong local presences, supports effective delivery of results.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation concludes that the CSP was evidence-based; has addressed the needs of most vulnerable populations in Nepal, and was aligned with national priorities, whilst adhering to humanitarian principles and integrating gender and other crosscutting considerations. WFP's shift towards a more development and capacity-strengthening-focused role, while maintaining its fundamental humanitarian role, aligned with Nepal's priority needs and policy direction.

CSP activities adapted to changing needs and conditions; helped enhance capacities of national institutions and supported the formulation of relevant policies, legislation and regulatory frameworks, as well as the delivery of basic services. They were implemented efficiently. However, the CSP lacked a strategic vision for integrating crisis response, resilience building and root causes insufficient synergies with partners; inadequate unearmarked funding. Limited take-up by government also hindered optimal results, sustained over time.

Recommendation 1. Design the next CSP based on a set of interconnected and coherent SOs fostering links between food systems and social protection.

Recommendation 2. Design an evidence-based CCS strategy to address policy and regulatory frameworks as well as institutional capacities to plan and deliver sustainable programmes aligned with national strategies/priorities.

Recommendation 3. Support the Government in designing nutrition specific and nutrition and gender sensitive programmes drawing on lessons learned from existing interventions.

Recommendation 4. Continue handing over of schools to the government whilst developing a strategy to support government policy, context-adapted modalities and management capacity of all engaged actors

Recommendation 5. Deepen WFP's climate change and resilience building support to targeted climate vulnerable locations and populations by integrating CCS at all government levels, advocacy and direct support to the most vulnerable.

Recommendation 6. Support the enhancement of the government's analytical capacities for more optimal evidence-based policy formulation and operational response.