



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022

CONTEXT

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a lower-middle-income country with the largest population (circa 200 million) and one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. Resources and capacities vary from one state to another and roughly 40 percent of the population lives in poverty with strong disparities by income, gender and location. Despite the drastic reduction of hunger in the past decades, nearly 24.6 million Nigerians still suffer from food insecurity. In recent years, this trend has reversed, particularly in the north of the country.

Nigeria faces multidimensional security challenges. The insurgency in the northeast has added pressure to food and nutrition security, particularly for vulnerable women and children. In Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states, 8.7 million people needed humanitarian assistance and more than 2 million people were internally displaced in 2021. The ongoing conflict has resulted in human rights violations and protection risks.

After a long absence, and following the initially geographically limited emergency response in the Northeast in 2016, WFP has reestablished itself in Nigeria.

SUBJECT AND FOCUS OF THE EVALUATION

The CSP (2019-2022) was designed for a transitional period, framed by six outcomes to apply a multi-dimensional approach of providing life-saving assistance as well as transformational assistance with a resilience focus, while helping to strengthen the capacities of the Government and other partners in early warning, preparedness, and response management.

Following the intensification of armed conflict in the northeast in 2019 and the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, WFP revisited its approach through two budget revisions, focusing on a growing emergency response. WFP increased the required budget from the original USD 587 million to USD 1.436 billion as the number of planned beneficiaries doubled from 1.1 million in 2019 to 2.2 million in 2021. As of November 2021, the revised needs-based plan was 59 percent funded with USD 846 million. The emergency response focus area (SO1) received 72 percent of the resources allocated.

OBJECTIVES AND USERS OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation was commissioned by the independent Office of Evaluation to provide evaluative evidence for accountability and learning to inform the design of the next WFP CSP in Nigeria. It covers WFP activities implemented between 2019 and 2021 and assesses continuity from the previous programme cycle, the extent to which the CSP introduced strategic shifts and implications for such shifts for performance and results.

The main users for this evaluation are the WFP Nigeria Country Office, the Regional Bureau for Western Africa, WFP headquarters technical divisions, the Government of Nigeria and other WFP Nigeria stakeholders and partners.

KEY EVALUATION FINDINGS

WFP's strategic position and contribution

The CSP is well aligned with national plans and priorities in the field of food and nutrition security, and WFP has established good relationships with key government counterparts at national and state level.

The CSP is also well aligned with the UNSDCF. WFP's active engagement with inter-agency processes and coordination mechanisms was highly appreciated.

Geographic targeting relied on consensual evidence through the Cadre Harmonisé process, in which WFP is a major contributor. Within intervention areas, community-based targeting helped reach the most food insecure. While the CSP generally paid attention to vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and women, use of protection, gender and conflict analyses to more fully identify the food security needs of all vulnerable groups was limited.

The CO adapted strategically to a number of shocks including COVID-19. However, resources were barely sufficient to make a real difference in the urban hotspots during this pandemic and in the northwest, where food insecurity has been rising.

WFP's contribution to CSP strategic outcomes

Overall, many output targets were reached with increased numbers of beneficiaries receiving cash and food assistance in 2019 and 2020, a significant achievement in the context of the deteriorating security situation and impact of COVID-19. However, performance across activities has been somewhat uneven and did not always keep pace with needs, due to underfunding.

SO1 activities (general distribution and MAM prevention) have been scaled up since the start of the CSP and WFP has been able to deliver strongly on planned outputs. In contrast, outcome indicators generally deteriorated over the course of the CSP, reflecting the worsening context. WFP continuously revised its beneficiary target numbers upward over the course of the CSP and managed to resource the scale up of the emergency response when needed. Nonetheless, a ration cut was necessary in October 2021 to reach a maximum number of people in need against limited resources.

SO2 activities (livelihood support) have felt the impact of the COVID pandemic and funding constraints and have therefore not been delivered consistently. While progress has been demonstrated, many beneficiaries had to be switched to unconditional food assistance for lack of resources, which prevented beneficiary graduation.

SO3 activities (nutrition prevention) were suspended in early 2020 due to a funding shortfall. Consolidating nutrition activities under one outcome could have helped communicating a coherent strategy and link to other activities.

Government officials have commended WFP's efforts on **SO4 and SO5**, (capacity strengthening and policy coherence) having contributed to enhanced public knowledge and policy development, and facilitated private sector engagement.

SO6 activities including common humanitarian services (logistics, emergency telecommunications and United Nations Humanitarian Air Services) served and enabled the humanitarian community at large to stay and deliver more effectively in the northeast.

Contribution to cross-cutting results

Progress was made on adherence to **humanitarian principles**, even though some stakeholders have concerns regarding WFP's operational independence due to its close partnership with the Government and military. WFP's also improved on **protection and accountability to affected populations**, though protection concerns remain and engagement with beneficiaries and communities needs to be strengthened, particularly the feedback channels available to beneficiaries. High prevalence of gender based violence in internally displaced person (IDP) camps and the premature return of IDPs due to camp closures require further attention from WFP and its partners. The CSP set the bar high on **gender equality** and progress was made on mainstreaming gender sensitivity in activities. However, to meet the commitment to gender transformation in a conflict environment, gender sensitivity could be further strengthened in assessments and community-based project planning.

WFP efficiency in resource use

The Global Commodity Management Facility helped WFP to deliver as per intended timeframes. The average lead time from supplier to destination was reduced from three months to under one month.

CSP coverage was generally appropriate, yet resource shortfalls made it impossible to match target numbers with the number of people in need as per the Cadre Harmonisé. Coverage issues were aggravated by lack of clarity among food security sector partners on the division of responsibility and the tracking of beneficiaries moving between locations.

Activities supported by WFP have been cost-efficient with post-delivery losses under one percent. Biometric identification has helped with deduplication and an advanced use of corporate platforms has helped visualising day-to-day commodity management issues.

Assessments to improve effectiveness have helped with fine-tuning targeting and modalities, but could be enhanced by including a perspective on the economic impact of different types of assistance.

Factors that explain WFP performance and strategic shift expected by the CSP

During the implementation period, it became clear that the CSP was designed under overly optimistic assumptions. The attempted transition to development programmes was made impossible due to the continued instability in the northeast and rising food insecurity also in other parts of the country.

Significant resources were made available to WFP for the emergency response in the initial CSP years, but the decline in funding in late 2021 is a major concern. Donors continue to appreciate WFP's ability to manage a response at a large scale outside the main urban centers in the northeast. WFP's logistics and analysis capacities have been widely praised. Non-emergency pillars of the CSP have continuously been underfunded.

Partnerships with the UN system, NGOs and the private sector are seen as constructive and partnerships with the Nigerian government at all levels are particularly strong. The need for working more closely with NGO partners to achieve further complementarity has been acknowledged.

The CSP provided little direction on geographical prioritization and could have provided greater flexibility for subsequent efforts by WFP to operate at scale, specifically in the northwest, where the situation has deteriorated.

High staff turnover and the corresponding loss of institutional memory and vacancies on key positions, including at senior levels, may have adversely affected CSP implementation.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

WFP has managed to position itself strategically in Nigeria by building strong partnerships, including with the Government at all levels. WFP has demonstrated the capacity to refocus and scale up in response to increased needs following the deterioration of the situation in the Northeast, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the escalation of conflict in the Northwest. However, significant numbers of people in need remained without assistance, due to funding shortfalls, unclear division of responsibilities between agencies, and beneficiary management challenges.

The strategic shift anticipated in the CSP towards development support was over-optimistic. Moving towards resilience, recovery and stabilisation should have been the subject of more in-depth background analysis to set realistic goals fitting the context.

WFP was at times challenged in fully adhering to humanitarian principles and there is still room for strengthening WFP's approach to protection, accountability to affected populations and gender equality.

Effective decision making, operational management and oversight, supported by streamlined processes, enabled cost-efficient and timely implementation. The capacity of WFP to sustain the momentum is somewhat at risk due to the reductions in WFP staff numbers and its field presence, and high turnover in senior positions, making continuous investment in knowledge sharing and management critical.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Focus on humanitarian challenges in the Northeast and Northwest emergencies, while continuing paving the way to a more developmental approach.

Recommendation 2. Develop a clear plan aimed at promoting full adherence to humanitarian norms and principles.

Recommendation 3. Incorporate a broader and more proactive approach to addressing protection and AAP issues beyond the food distribution process.

Recommendation 4. Building on current progress, further develop a concrete set of actionable measures to address gender equality in the next CSP.

Recommendation 5. Improve targeting and monitoring mechanisms to further increase coverage and inclusion of vulnerable populations.