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SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – CENTRAL AMERICA REGIONAL PORTFOLIO (2007–2011)



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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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Should you have any questions regarding availability of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first regional portfolio evaluation commissioned by the Office of Evaluation. It provides a strategic analysis of WFP's regional operations in Central America during 2007–2011, covering two regional protracted relief and recovery operations and two regional development projects in four of the region's seven countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The evaluation also assessed whether the 2012–2013 Regional Strategic Vision set an appropriate direction. Using four evaluation questions, it examined the five criteria of relevance, complementarity, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

The four countries evaluated are middle-income countries, but have high levels of economic disparity and poverty, especially among marginalized indigenous populations and the urban poor. Micronutrient deficiencies are a critical problem in the region, exacerbated by undernutrition. Recurrent natural hazards and the population's high vulnerability create a vicious circle of development challenges.

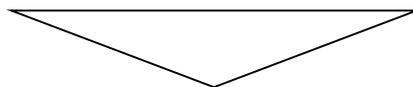
The evaluation found that the regional portfolio was strategically positioned to operate in Central America, and that the 2012–2013 Regional Strategic Vision reflected the operating environment and challenges. The portfolio complemented government programmes, but there were missed opportunities for better coordination with United Nations partners. There was also room to improve vertical communications within WFP in some areas.

Although the protracted relief and recovery operations exceeded their target numbers of beneficiaries and were reported as providing effective and efficient services for responding to natural hazards, they did not always reach the most vulnerable people. WFP's capacity development work contributed to improving the quality of national nutrition programming, and investments in nutrition and micronutrients across the region appear to be sustainable.

Measuring the overall performance of the regional portfolio was challenged by the lack of clear targets at the outset of the evaluation period, monitoring weaknesses and the limited ability to track trust funds. Nevertheless, despite the limitations in quantitative data, the evaluation found that WFP's engagement was viewed as a key resource for addressing hunger and poverty across the region.

The evaluation made nine recommendations, identifying opportunities for improvement and change, as well as efforts that have shown promise and that WFP should continue and prioritize.

DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report – Central America Regional Portfolio (2007–2011)” (WFP/EB.A/2014/7-C) and the management response in WFP/EB.A/2014/7-C/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

INTRODUCTION

Evaluation Features

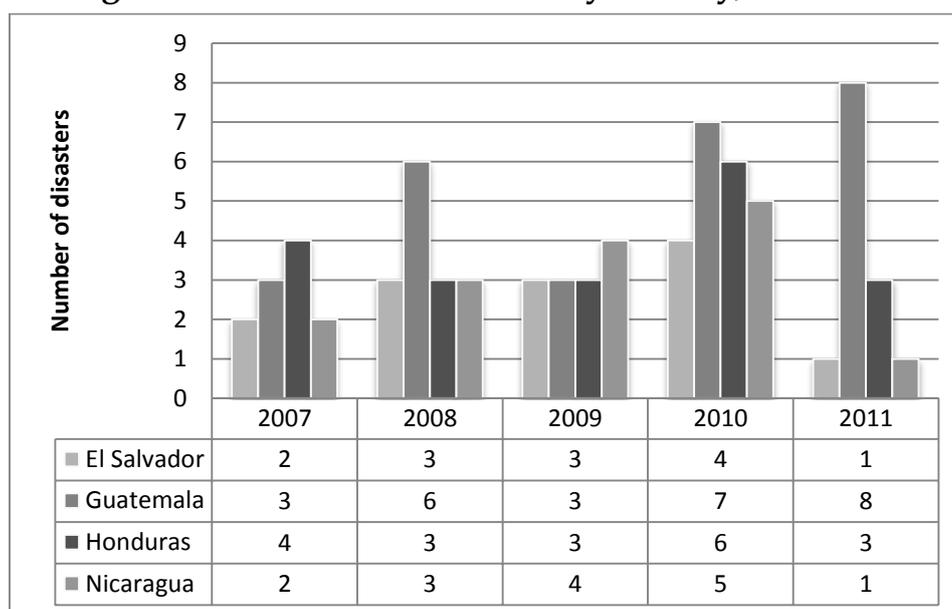
1. This is the first regional portfolio evaluation (RPE) commissioned by the Office of Evaluation. RPEs aim to improve the evaluation coverage of countries with small country offices that have regional operations. This RPE provides a strategic analysis of the performance of WFP's regional operations in Central America, covering the four countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and the regional bureau in Panama during 2007–2011. It focuses on the overall regional portfolio, and not on individual regional operations or the portfolios of country operations in individual countries.
2. The RPE aimed to: i) assess the performance of WFP's regional portfolio in four countries with a common context; ii) identify lessons; and iii) provide recommendations for WFP regional operations and strategy in Central America. It examined the five criteria of relevance, coherence/complementarity, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Regional Context

3. Central America comprises seven countries with a total population of 34 million people. WFP has a field presence in four of these countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. These are middle-income countries (MICs), but have high levels of poverty and economic disparity, with many poor people in marginalized groups such as indigenous or Afro-descendent communities: 75.7 percent¹ of the indigenous population in Guatemala and 71 percent² in Honduras live in poverty. Most indigenous communities in Nicaragua live on the Atlantic Coast, which is characterized by extreme poverty. Marginal lands, economic poverty, and political and economic exclusion are features of vulnerable communities across Central America.
4. Malnutrition in Central America is complex. The region faces the double burden of persistent undernutrition accompanied by emerging overnutrition. Micronutrient deficiencies are a critical problem, exacerbated by undernutrition and poor dietary diversity.
5. Rising food prices have made it increasingly difficult for poorer households to meet dietary requirements, particularly among market-dependent urban populations. Food access and availability are critical for food security. Limited access to food because of poverty is a major cause of nutrition problems and food insecurity in Central America.
6. Vulnerable populations live on marginal lands and in poor housing with limited options for disaster prevention, preparedness or mitigation. Combined with recurrent natural hazards, (see Figure 1) this situation perpetuates a vicious cycle of increasing vulnerability, particularly in the dry corridor that cuts across western Guatemala, central Honduras, northern and central Nicaragua and western El Salvador.

¹ World Bank. 2009. *Guatemala Poverty Assessment: Good Performance at Low Levels, 2009*. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2009/07/08/000333038_20090708235221/Rendered/PDF/439200ESW0GT0P1IC0Disclosed07171091.pdf

² World Bank. 2006. *Honduras Poverty Assessment: Attaining Poverty Reduction, 2006*. http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2006/07/24/000310607_20060724154344/Rendered/PDF/356220v10HN0gr101OFFICIAL0USE0ONLY1.pdf

Figure 1: Numbers of disasters by country, 2007–2011

WFP's Regional Portfolio in Central America

7. In addition to assessing WFP's regional operations from 2007 to 2011, the evaluation also assessed whether the regional strategic vision for 2012–2013 set an appropriate direction. The evaluation period covered a critical time for the regional bureau as funding for country-level operations across the region began shifting from external donor sources to local investments through trust funds financed by national governments and the private sector. Trust funds started in 2005 in Honduras and in 2006 in El Salvador.
8. There were two regional development projects (DEVs) and two regional protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) during the evaluation period. Given the frequent natural disasters and hazards in Central America, in 2007 the regional bureau developed regional PRRO 104440 to address the food needs of the most vulnerable and to build community-level capacity to cope with disasters, aiming to reduce the need for WFP support over the longer term. PRRO 104440 also worked with partners and governments to improve monitoring, alerts and preparedness. The PRRO was implemented in all four countries and also received funds for Panama.³ Starting in 2011, PRRO 200043 expanded the efforts of PRRO 104440 to ensure effective and more timely response to natural hazards and disasters. It introduced pre-positioning for contingencies and expanded early recovery activities, including food for work (FFW),⁴ food for training and food for assets (FFA) to help restore livelihoods and market access and improve resilience to shocks.
9. The two DEVs were the first regional DEVs to focus on capacity development in nutrition. They were implemented together under the umbrella of a regional initiative – “Towards the Eradication of Child Undernutrition in Central America and the Dominican Republic by 2015” – sharing staff and other resources. Both DEVs worked beyond the four countries of WFP's Central American region, covering Latin America and the Caribbean. DEV 104110 aimed to generate a knowledge system to enhance awareness of hunger and malnutrition,

³ WFP contributions of USD 44,537 from Spain and private donors.

⁴ Since 2011, WFP has preferred the term “food for assets” (FFA), but during the evaluation period, FFW was the term used. In interviews, reference was made to the potential shift from food for work towards cash for work, but no distinction was made between assets and work.

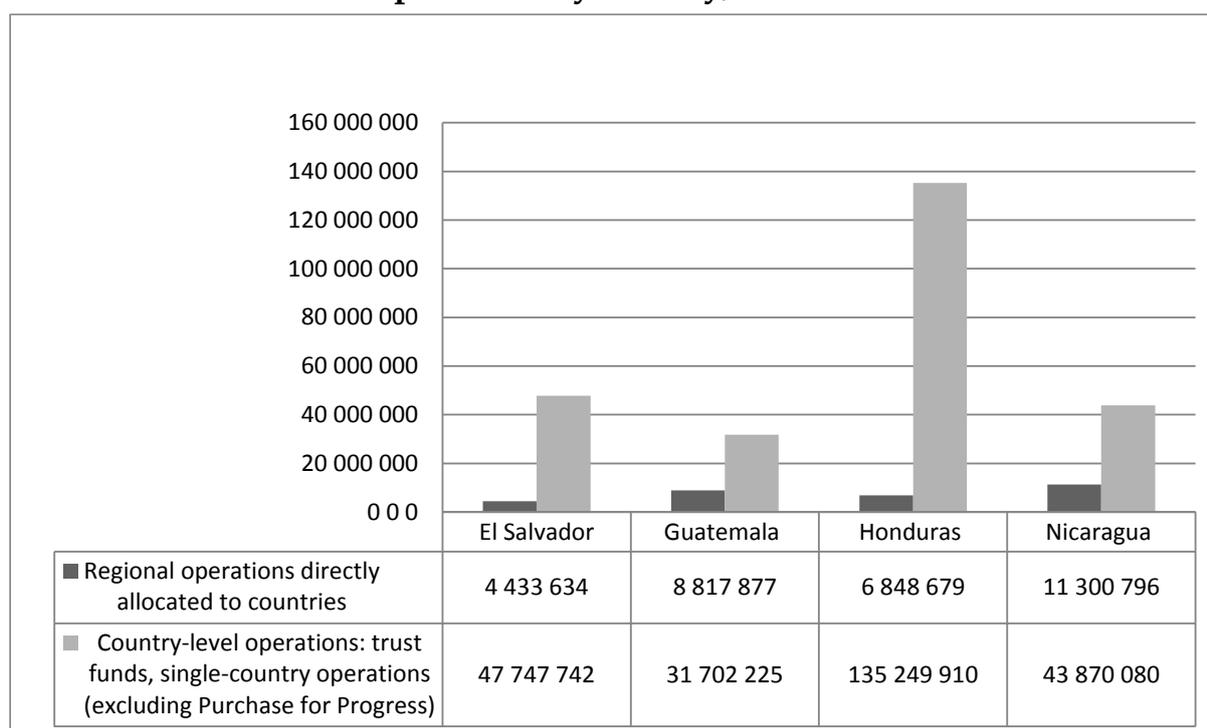
emphasizing their high social costs in comparison with the costs of measures to reduce them. DEV 104210 worked to increase the capacity and commitment of Latin American and Caribbean governments in reducing hunger and chronic undernutrition among children aged 6–36 months through integrated micronutrient programmes.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance: The Portfolio's Strategic Positioning at the Regional Level

10. The regional portfolio was appropriate to the development and humanitarian context; in line with current development theories and nutrition policies; and responsive to the recurrent natural hazards across the region, both rapid-onset, such as floods and storms, and slow-onset, such as droughts and the current coffee rust crisis. Numerous interviewees from national and local government, United Nations agencies and civil society cited as a strength WFP's ability to respond rapidly to natural disasters and to assist authorities in responding themselves.
11. There were many examples of WFP's alignment with country objectives and use of local systems. The evaluation found that WFP aligned well with national poverty reduction efforts by reinforcing civil protection as a component of hazard response under the PRROs, and through the DEVs' increased investment in nutrition. WFP implemented government school feeding programmes through national trust funds in Honduras and El Salvador. Civil protection partners cited WFP's work to improve the regional harmonization of customs procedures for donations during crises as a success.
12. From review of country portfolio activities and funding, and interviews with WFP country office staff, the evaluation found that regional DEVs and PRROs complemented country-level operations. For example, country office staff mentioned that the availability of regional PRRO funds facilitated responses to rapid-onset natural hazards that might not have been severe enough to warrant a separate emergency operation at the country level. Donors cited regional operations as an attractive investment mechanism for addressing natural hazard and nutrition challenges across the region. The DEVs complemented national and WFP country programmes by supporting work on nutrition and food security that was unlikely to be funded at the country level. Government agencies, donors and other partners did not distinguish between regional and country-level operations, further indicating their complementarity. Figure 2 compares the contributions of regional funds to country-level operations with the funds for single-country operations.

Figure 2: Comparisons of funding from regional and country-level operations by country, 2007–2011



13. Regarding WFP's coordination with humanitarian partners, the evaluation received mixed feedback from United Nations system members. WFP was found helpful in harmonizing procedures under the United Nations Emergency Technical Teams for responding to hazards with governments. However, harmonization of specific areas such as assessments could be improved to mobilize a broader range of expertise and enhance information sharing with governments and United Nations agencies.
14. At the macro level, the regional portfolio was aligned with WFP's Strategic Objectives, but there was limited alignment across WFP systems and processes at the operational level. There was almost no harmonization of vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM), comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis, or monitoring and evaluation (M&E) procedures across WFP offices within the region, limiting the opportunities for aggregation and analysis within and among countries.
15. Despite considerable efforts, the evaluation was unable to assess comprehensively the importance of trust funds to the regional portfolio. Trust funds were not recorded in WINGS I, and WINGS II has only recently started recording them. They were not included in contribution reports from WFP Headquarters or in Standard Project Reports (SPRs); the current standard project reporting structure does not capture their role or impact.
16. Government interviewees indicated that governments invested in WFP through trust funds because WFP is a reliable and accountable partner that verifies expenses and demonstrates results. Country offices and the regional bureau frequently cited trust funds as a valuable mechanism for working efficiently with governments, the private sector and other non-bilateral WFP donors/partners. However, accountability and the documentation of achievements were not systematic and did not extend beyond the country level, resulting in both local contributions and WFP accomplishments being undervalued.

Coherence/Complementarity and Factors Driving WFP's Regional Strategy

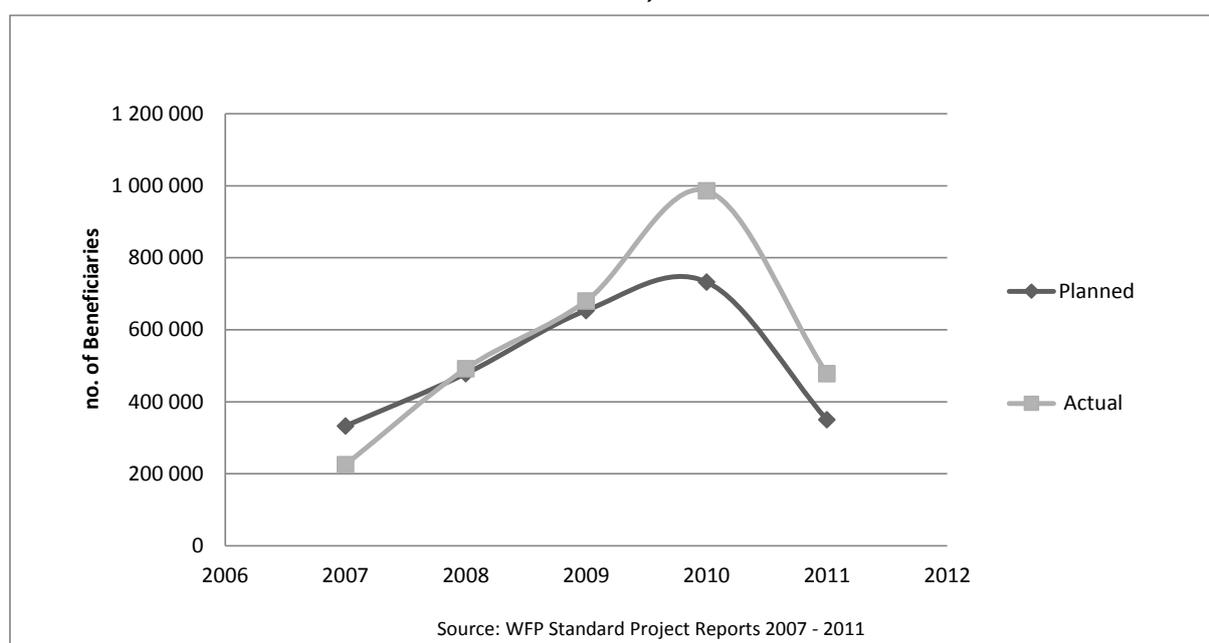
17. During the 2007–2011 evaluation period, there was no WFP regional strategy or strategic vision document to guide assessment of whether WFP efforts were consistent with and supportive of regional strategic objectives. The Regional Strategic Vision developed for 2012–2013 reflected the operating realities of the region and the context, but the evaluation found room for improved harmonization of measurements and monitoring systems across countries, to inform future regional planning and the assessment of performance against regional objectives.
18. The evaluation team considered appropriate WFP's prioritization of and contribution to emergency response and nutrition as a means of addressing the repetitive, cyclical and sometimes cumulative patterns of food insecurity that characterize the region, particularly certain hotspots – affected districts and communities – within each country. WFP was repeatedly recognized for these contributions.
19. However, WFP's efforts did not comprehensively address the underlying causes of undernutrition, hunger and food insecurity in the region. For example, in Honduras, of the 17 municipalities where the PRROs provided general food distributions (GFDs), 12 – approximately 70 percent – needed GFDs in three of the five years evaluated. While appreciating the assistance received, community leaders in one flood-affected community noted that their own priorities for enhancing resilience were improved resource management of rivers and land, and enhanced flood mitigation strategies. The Pan American Health Organization and core nutrition documents mentioned the importance of literacy for girls and women as an underlying factor affecting nutrition. However, there were no clear linkages between DEV activities and school feeding, and no engagement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) or other actors to complement WFP's efforts and facilitate more comprehensive solutions. From interviews with WFP staff, it appears that the new resilience initiative attempts to address these underlying issues. An operation for addressing nutrition and contributing to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) alliance and other 1,000-day initiatives has been developed, but funding does not yet appear to be available.
20. WFP is engaging increasingly with regional and national partners in strategic discussions regarding food security and recurrent crises. However, it has not yet defined an appropriate role for itself or identified how this role would complement those of other stakeholders in the region. Interviewees from governments, donors and other United Nations agencies noted a tendency for WFP to seek resources independently and solicit collaboration from partners with essential capacities after receiving funding and during the implementation stage, rather than engaging in joint planning with partners. A recent exception to this tendency is WFP's work with governments on 1,000-days nutrition efforts across the region. Stakeholders were involved in the design of this programme, but were confused by its delayed start and unaware of the lack of funding. Within WFP, country offices also expressed confusion about the status of this planned regional nutrition programme.
21. Country offices and the regional bureau have developed successful approaches to working with governments, moving beyond coordination to closer collaboration, and allowing governments to lead with WFP in a supporting rather than a driving or directive role.
22. In interviews, WFP staff repeatedly mentioned that MICs present specific challenges, but to date there is no global strategy for WFP's engagement in these countries. Corporate systems and policies for engagement with MICs were described as at best neutral, and at worst as obstacles to successful implementation. To address the poverty gap in MICs, efforts need to focus on the root causes of poverty and to transition from a vision of emergency response towards a vision of development.

Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability of the Regional Portfolio

⇒ Coverage

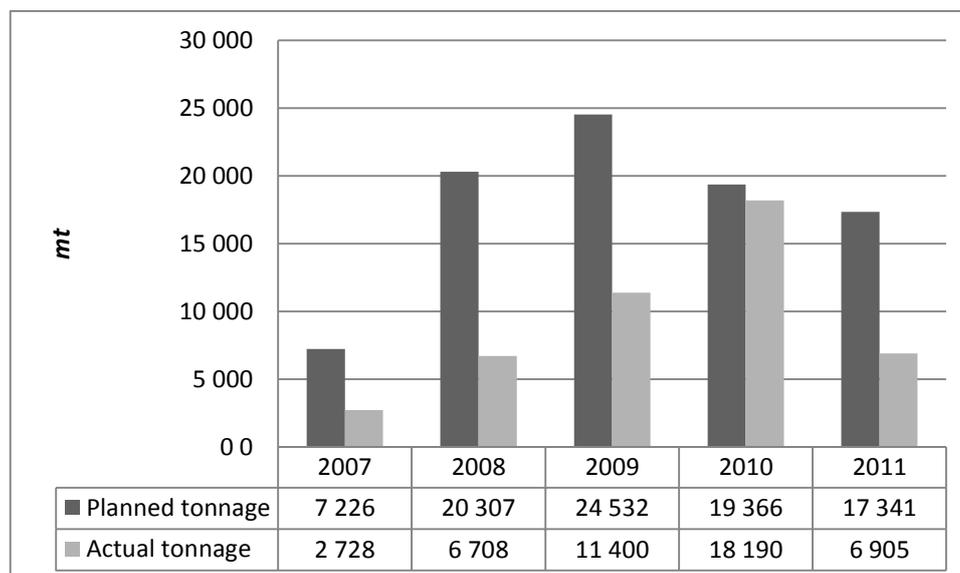
23. Under the regional PRROs, country offices collaborated with partners in the field on beneficiary selection based on established criteria. PRRO SPRs indicate that funding availability and delays were a challenge. However, under both PRROs, WFP managed to reach more beneficiaries with less food and money than planned. As Figure 3 indicates, both PRROs exceeded their target numbers of beneficiaries. The Honduras country office explained that beneficiary numbers were high because the PRROs operated in many small emergencies. The other country offices did not have clear explanations of why beneficiary numbers differed from planned. They stated that reporting exact numbers is a challenge because of, for example, double-counting of beneficiaries participating in several activities.

Figure 3: Total beneficiaries reached by assistance to strengthen disaster preparedness and mitigation among marginalized populations under both PRROs, 2007–2011



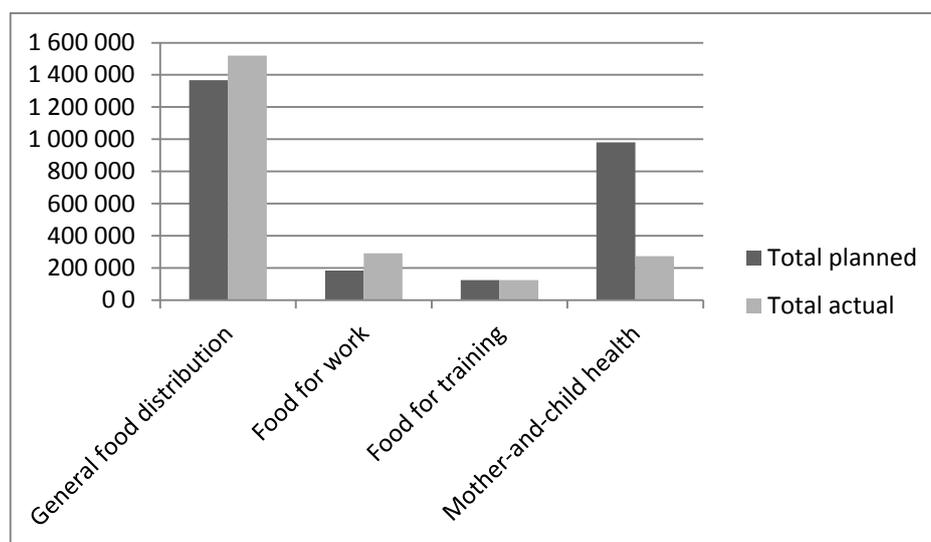
24. Figure 4 compares the planned and actual tonnages of food distributed across both PRROs during the evaluation period. In all but one year actual tonnage was less than 50 percent of planned. Interviews with WFP staff and review of the data indicate that this was because of the limited availability of food resources, funding shortfalls, and the reduced duration of food distributions. During the evaluation period, PRRO 104440 received 67.5 percent of its required contributions and PRRO 200043, 81.7 percent. These figures compare relatively well with those of other WFP operations. According to the Honduras country office, beneficiaries often chose to leave the shelters provided and return home after a few days or weeks, to protect their belongings and continue their lives, thus reducing the food distributed.

Figure 4: Planned and actual tonnages of food distributed under regional PRROs



25. The evaluation team found WFP's geographic targeting accurate, and the food security and nutrition challenges facing vulnerable groups were well identified and described. However, WFP and other United Nations agencies have difficulty designing operations that target and reach these vulnerable groups – especially pregnant and lactating women, and children under 5 years of age – including in emergencies. The logistics and coordination of distributions for mother-and-child health (MCH) activities were frequently cited as challenging. SPRs and PRRO data also indicate low enrolment rates at health centres. WFP was 72 percent below targets for MCH activities. No targeting or programming strategies considered the needs of the most vulnerable in efforts to generate longer-term development impacts.

Figure 5: Cumulative totals of beneficiaries by activity under both PRROs, 2007–2011



26. It was not possible to calculate the number of beneficiaries reached under the two DEVs as these focused on enhancing capacities, policies and investments to address hunger and nutrition across the region. However, the evaluation found that the DEVs contributed to expanding the evidence and knowledge base on nutrition, producing more than 40 technical documents for the Latin America and Caribbean region.

⇒ *Gender*

27. Addressing gender issues and women's engagement in programmes is a challenge. Under both PRROs, the evaluation found efforts to issue rations and vouchers to women and to engage women as leaders in food management committees. However, over the evaluation period, the number of women in leadership positions appears to have declined in all countries except Honduras. SPRs disaggregated beneficiary data by sex, but the integration of gender issues into the design or implementation of efforts to address differences and potential disparities was unclear.

⇒ *Sustainability*

28. The best evidence of the sustainability of WFP efforts is continuing engagement with governments and increased capacity of governments and partners to address hunger, nutrition and food security challenges across the region. Although limitations in the durability of some of WFP's FFW programmes were acknowledged, the transfer of capacity and ownership to government and local civil society organizations was repeatedly highlighted as a strength of WFP, as was WFP's bridging role during changes in government leadership.

Performance and Results of the Regional Portfolio 2007–2011

29. Based on findings regarding the three dimensions described above, the team assessed the overall performance of the regional portfolio. The evaluation found that the regional portfolio was strategically positioned for operating in Central America. However, the desired medium- and long-term outcomes were difficult or impossible to measure because outcome indicators of efficiency, effectiveness or overall performance were not defined at the outset, measured or tracked consistently. Logical frameworks and reporting across the region were not standardized, and framework indicators were not always consistent with local VAM indicators and measurement.

30. Despite the absence of quantitative outcome indicators to measure performance, general qualitative feedback from interviewees suggested that WFP's efforts have helped to improve hazard management and response and the quality of nutrition interventions across the region. Trend data indicated improvements in the global hunger index and increasing investments in nutrition in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. However, it was impossible to distinguish the specific contributions that WFP made to these improvements.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall Assessment

⇒ *Relevance: Strategic positioning at the regional level*

31. Despite the absence during the evaluation period of a WFP regional strategy or an MIC strategy, the regional portfolio was strategically positioned to operate in Central America. WFP used food aid and other resources to deliver programmes that responded to specific needs and integrated local investments into national hunger and poverty priorities shared with WFP.
32. The evaluation concluded that the regional operations were relevant and complemented country-level activities. However, the limited tracking and reporting of activities funded by trust funds resulted in the undervaluing of significant local contributions and related accomplishments.

⇒ *Coherence and complementarity*

33. In most cases, WFP complemented and collaborated with government authorities across the region. Some partners and donors highlighted WFP's ability to identify gaps in nutrition and food security, but opportunities were missed for improving coordination with United Nations partners to improve effectiveness.
34. There was no uniform WFP strategy across the region and no document clearly articulated how regional operations were complementary to or improved the coherence of WFP's country-level efforts; vertical communications were also less than optimal in some areas, notably trust funds and the status of the SUN initiative. Nevertheless, the regional portfolio appeared to complement government efforts and those of WFP at other levels. For example, the regional PRROs complemented country offices' activities in response to local hazards.

⇒ *Effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability*

35. Assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional portfolio was challenged by the lack of clear targets at the outset of the evaluation period, and monitoring weaknesses. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the PRROs exceeded their targets for beneficiaries reached, and were reported to provide effective and efficient services for natural hazard responses. These efforts are not yet sustainable because communities are affected by similar natural hazards year after year.
36. WFP's advocacy and capacity development efforts under the DEVs helped to improve the quality of national nutrition programming, and investments in nutrition support and micronutrients across the region appear to be sustainable.

⇒ *Performance and results of the regional portfolio*

37. Overall, the WFP regional portfolio exceeded many of its numerical targets, but did not always appear to reach the most vulnerable people. Based on interviews with a wide range of stakeholders and despite the limitations in quantitative data, the evaluation team concluded that WFP was perceived as a positive partner in the region, with some areas for improvement. WFP's engagement was perceived as a key resource for addressing hunger and poverty across Central America, particularly when natural hazards exacerbated conditions.

Lessons for the Future

38. Strategy and M&E are critical for monitoring the implementation of programmes and facilitating evaluation. If there is not a clearly defined strategy for the portfolio, portfolio evaluations have few data and reference points for assessing performance. Monitoring of performance is equally important. The WFP global indicators currently used to measure performance do not correspond sufficiently well to the needs of the region or to WFP's choice of responses, such as capacity development.
39. WFP's successful collaboration with governments is particularly important in Central America, where reliance on international donor assistance is declining. This success offers lessons for guiding WFP forward, not only in Central America, but also in other countries, particularly MICs.
40. WFP needs a strategy for working in MICs. WFP's internal concept note on MICs highlights the use of pilots and emphasizes partnerships with governments and others, but the descriptions of pilots do not clearly delineate MIC governments' role as donors/investors. Tracking and understanding of the role of trust funds is a core element of this gap.
41. WFP should continue to build on its strength in logistics – which is recognized by governments and United Nations partners – and should continue to move beyond providing logistics services to developing the logistics capacities of regional and country partners, such as it has been doing with the Coordination Centre for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC) and in Nicaragua with the National Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response System (SINAPRED).
42. The evaluation recommendations identify opportunities for improvement and change, as well as efforts that have shown promise and that WFP should continue and prioritize. To implement these recommendations, WFP should ensure that the functions of the regional bureau are adequately staffed and funded, in both operational and technical areas.

Recommendations

⇒ *Opportunities for improvements and changes*

43. **Recommendation 1: WFP regional and country operations should ensure that operational planning, implementation and monitoring efforts target the most vulnerable.**
 - In planning, monitoring, and reporting, WFP should identify how its country offices will address the needs of vulnerable groups – both urban and rural – in regional operations. Specifically, WFP country offices and the regional bureau should identify how DEV efforts that focus on capacity are expected to address the needs of the vulnerable; how PRROs will reach the most vulnerable groups through GFD; and how WFP country offices and the regional bureau will monitor these efforts.
 - Opportunities for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable include: i) country offices integrating gender issues into assessment, targeting, programme implementation and monitoring, and analysing and developing protocols that facilitate implementation and overcome logistical challenges to reach women and children in the 1,000-day window; and ii) country offices identifying specific opportunities for integrating the most vulnerable into FFA activities.

44. **Recommendation 2: The regional bureau and country offices should define WFP's desired operational role in risk management and the prevention of hazards and their effects.**
- Country offices and the regional bureau should use the recently defined Building Resilient Communities and Municipalities (ComRes)⁵ operation and the WFP policy on disaster risk reduction and management approved at the end of 2011 to develop and refine its role in resilience and risk prevention and management across the region.
 - The regional bureau and country offices should consider developing knowledge management and advocacy efforts, possibly including a study similar to the Cost of Hunger study to improve understanding and raise awareness and investments.
 - Once the regional bureau and country offices have clearly set out WFP's desired role in risk management across the region, WFP Headquarters should provide commensurate corporate backing to networking with key stakeholders from government, donors and the private sector, and to identifying and raising funding to support implementation.
45. **Recommendation 3: With significant inputs from country offices and regional bureaux, WFP Headquarters should develop a global MIC strategy that incorporates needs analysis, planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting guidance.**
- The MIC strategy should build on WFP's commitments to government ownership and be collaborative rather than directive.
 - The regional bureau and WFP Headquarters should improve the documentation of successful South–South collaboration, and use it to exploit South–South collaboration effectively.
 - WFP Headquarters and the regional bureau should document current collaboration efforts with the local private sector and draft guidance on facilitating and scaling up private sector collaboration.
 - The MIC strategy should address MICs' nutrition challenges, including both over- and undernutrition, and incorporating chronic, and not only acute, undernutrition.
46. **Recommendation 4: WFP should clarify roles and communications among and within WFP offices – Headquarters, the regional bureau and country offices – engaged in regional operations.**
- The regional bureau should formalize the roles of focal points for regional operations, with clear lines of communication within and among country offices to ensure clarity and continuity. Both the regional bureau and country offices should distribute relevant minutes/action items more widely to staff across the region.
 - The regional bureau and country offices should develop a common understanding of their respective roles in, and responsibilities for, donor engagement to support regional operations.

⁵ *Construyendo Comunidades y Municipios Resilientes (ComRes)* programme document.

47. **Recommendation 5: WFP should organize a comprehensive evaluation of trust funds in Central America.**

- The evaluation would identify the strengths, opportunities, risks and weaknesses of the mechanism, and facilitate a fuller understanding of their current influence and potential role as part of WFP's MIC strategy and programming.

⇒ *Opportunities for continuing and prioritizing efforts*

48. **Recommendation 6: WFP should strengthen needs assessments, VAM and M&E so they contribute to regional programme performance and not only to standardized reporting.**

- WFP Headquarters should review budget guidance to ensure adequate investment in staffing and resources to support an effective and regionally coherent and consistent approach to VAM and M&E in all countries, making fuller use of the regional bureau to support smaller country offices.
- The regional bureau and country offices should standardize approaches across regional operations. Country offices should use information from assessments and M&E to monitor and encourage performance across regional and country operations.
- WFP Headquarters should review current global indicators, assessments and monitoring systems to ensure there are adequate indicators available for use in Central America.
- As WFP introduces new modalities – Purchase for Progress (P4P), cash for work, community resilience – country offices should consider implementing pilots, with careful monitoring to ensure effectiveness before taking to scale.

49. **Recommendation 7: The regional bureau and country offices should continue to build positive collaboration with governments and regional bodies, and South–South linkages.**

- Specific technical areas for further collaboration include nutrition, agriculture production, markets, climate change, and risk management.
- WFP should continue to provide collaborative support and create innovative collaborative efforts such as improved stock positioning and logistics, increased government investment in nutrition, successful South–South collaboration, and leadership in the Dry Corridor Initiative.
- WFP should consider designing and submitting joint proposals with other United Nations partners such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNICEF to improve donor acceptability and the mobilization of expertise across the United Nations system.

50. **Recommendation 8: The regional bureau and country offices should continue incorporating public policy into programme design and implementation.**

- The regional bureau and country offices should continue to play an important role at the national policy level, promoting the food security and nutrition agenda and linking WFP interventions effectively to public policies, projects and programmes to ensure continuity and sustainability.
- The regional bureau and country offices should continue to identify ways of providing continuity and leadership in food security and nutrition during government transitions.

51. **Recommendation 9: The regional bureau and country offices should continue to work with governments, other regional stakeholders and donors to raise awareness of slow-onset hazards – coffee rust, drought, etc. – across the region and to develop nationally relevant protocols for response.**

- Country offices should provide assistance to civil protection authorities, clarifying response possibilities, and roles and responsibilities across ministries and departments in declaring and addressing slow hazards as emergencies.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ComRes	Building Resilient Communities and Municipalities (<i>Construyendo Comunidades y Municipios Resilientes</i>)
DEV	development project
FFA	food for assets
FFW	food for work
GFD	general food distribution
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MCH	mother-and-child health
MIC	middle-income country
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
RPE	regional portfolio evaluation
SPR	Standard Project Report
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition (initiative)
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping