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**Executive Board  
Second Regular Session**

**Rome, 4–7 November 2013**

## **EVALUATION REPORTS**

**Agenda item 6**

*For consideration*



Distribution: GENERAL  
**WFP/EB.2/2013/6-D**  
23 September 2013  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

## **SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – THE CONGO COUNTRY PORTFOLIO (2009–2012)**

This document is printed in a limited number of copies. Executive Board documents are available on WFP's Website (<http://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

## 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.

Director, OEV\*: Ms H. Wedgwood tel.: 066513-2030

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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).

\* Office of Evaluation

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of the Congo is a lower-middle income country with a relatively small population estimated at 4.1 million in 2011. It has suffered several episodes of civil war since independence in 1960, and years of unrest have resulted in weak national institutions and administration with limited implementation capacity. Over the years, it has also been a host nation for refugees from neighbouring countries. The security situation has stabilized and since 2000 the country has been transitioning from a humanitarian to a development context.

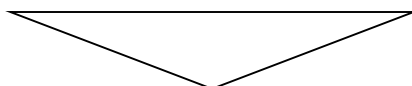
The economy of the Congo has grown significantly since 2008 but remains largely based on oil. The country continues to face fundamental development challenges, with poor social indicators, food insecurity and inequality still causing concern. Agriculture performs below its potential and a substantial proportion of the population's food needs are imported. Today, however, the country has the potential to invest in economic and social development.

The country portfolio evaluation of WFP activities in the Congo covers the period from 2009 to 2012. The evaluation serves the dual purpose of facilitating accountability and learning and focuses on three evaluation questions relating to: i) portfolio alignment and strategic positioning; ii) factors that have driven WFP's strategic decision-making; and iii) performance and results. This portfolio evaluation is of particular relevance as it concerns a middle-income country and comes at a time when a new country strategy document and country programme are being prepared.

The evaluation found WFP activities appropriate and relevant to the evolving development and humanitarian needs of the country's population, having adequate coverage and improving strategic positioning and alignment with emerging government priorities over time. The portfolio is well aligned with WFP corporate objectives, including the shift to food assistance. However, it did not consistently follow the specific guidance provided by WFP policies. WFP's entrepreneurial leadership in the changing context is acknowledged, but operational constraints were insufficiently recognized and resulted in efficiency, effectiveness and overall performance being below expectations. Across the portfolio, weaknesses in design, planning, implementation and monitoring resulted in beneficiaries receiving irregular or incomplete entitlements. WFP's achievement of outputs was limited by the fact that its ambitious evolving agenda was not matched with sufficient resources for implementation. In the Congo WFP is still perceived primarily as a humanitarian organization. Its recent experience in innovative social protection and national capacity development needs to be consolidated by strengthening its own technical and operational capacity in service delivery and capacity development.

The evaluation identified lessons on the challenges and opportunities of small country offices operating in middle-income countries, particularly in terms of capacity development, transition planning, funding, staffing and supporting innovation with appropriate capacity and guidance. Several of the ten recommendations relate directly to the development of the new country strategy document; others are intended for immediate implementation by the country office with appropriate corporate support.

## DRAFT DECISION\*



The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report – The Congo Country Portfolio (2009–2012)” (WFP/EB.2/2013/6-D) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2013/6-D/Add.1, and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account considerations raised by the Board during its discussion.

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\* 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.

## Fact Sheet: WFP's Portfolio in the Congo

### Timeline and funding level of the Congo portfolio 2007–2012

Operation	Title	Time Frame	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012				
SO 200413	Strengthening the logistics capacity of the Government of the Congo to respond to the emergency in Brazzaville	May 12 - Oct 12						Req: US\$450,000 Contrib: US\$425,000				
IR-EMOP 200408	Emergency Assistance to Internally Displaced People	Mar 12 - Aug 12						Req: US\$1.5				
DEV 200144	Support to Primary Education (in Cuvette, Lekoumou, Plateaux and Pool Regions)	Oct 11 - Dec 13						Req: US\$14.2 Contrib: US\$9.8 →				
DEV 200211*	Development Operation the Congo - Safety Net Programme	Jul 11 - Apr 13						Req: US\$3.6 Contrib: US\$3.1 →				
PRRO 200147	Assistance to Refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Likouala Province of the Congo	Mar 11 - Dec 12						Req: US\$33.9 Contrib: US\$13.2				
EMOP 200095	Food Assistance to Congolese People Displaced in Likouala Province	Jan 10 - Feb 11				Req: US\$37.7 Contrib: US\$18.1						
SO 200140	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in the Congo	Jan 10 - Dec 10				Req: US\$2.1 Contrib: US\$482,000						
IR-EMOP 200093	Displaced Population from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Likouala Region	Nov 09 - Feb 10				Req: US\$499,000 Contrib: US\$413,000						
PRRO 103121	Assistance to Populations Affected by Conflict and Poverty	Jun 07 - Jun 11				Req: US\$29.1 Contrib: US\$16.6						
Food distributed (mt)			2 475	3 497	3 673	8 358	7 917	5 296				
Direct costs (US\$ millions)			2.8	3.4	4.5	11.6	11.7	-				
Beneficiaries (actual)			M/b	W/g	M/b	W/g	M/b	W/g	M/b	W/g	M/b	W/g
			30 884	38 636	29 804	41 711	31 463	39 941	62 959	102 139	76 982	145 044
Total beneficiaries (actual)			69 520	71 515	71 404	165 098	222 026	174 117				

Legend Funding Level
> 75%
Between 50% and 75%
Less than 50%

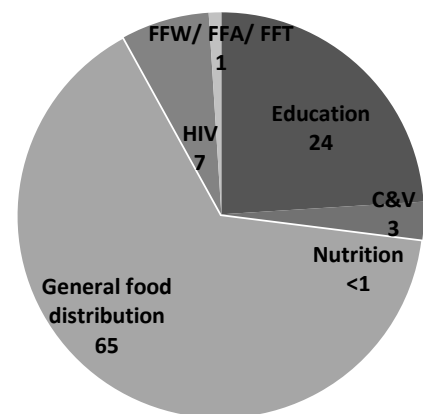
Source: last SPR available, Resource Situations, Annual Perform Reports 2006–2012. Requirements (Req.) and Contributions (Contrib.) are in US\$ millions, unless otherwise stated. \* Project did not start in 2011.

### Activities by operation and beneficiaries proportion by activity 2009–2012

Operation	Type	HIV	Education	Nutrition	General food distribution	FFW/FFT/FFA	Cash and voucher	Strategic Objectives (2008–2013)
IR-EMOP 200408					X			1
DEV 200144			X					4
DEV 200211		X	X	X			X	4, 5
PRRO 200147					X			1
PRRO 103121		X	X	X	X	X		1, 2, 3, 4
EMOP 200095				X	X			1
IR-EMOP 200093					X			1
<b>Planned % of beneficiaries</b>		11%	29%	1%	42%	1%	-	
<b>Actual % of beneficiaries</b>		9%	24%	0%	52%	1%	-	

Source: Dacota, Project Documents, SPRs 2009–2012

### Planned % of beneficiaries 2007–2012



Source: SPRs 2009–2012

**Top 5 donors:** United States of America, Brazil, United Nations Foundation Central Emergency Response Fund, European Union, the Congo

**Partners:** Government, 8 international agencies, 14 non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

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## INTRODUCTION

### Evaluation Features

1. This country portfolio evaluation (CPE) covers operations in the Congo from 2009 to 2012. Country portfolio evaluations serve the dual purpose of facilitating accountability and contributing to learning. They evaluate the entirety of WFP activities in a country against three evaluation questions relating to: i) portfolio alignment and strategic positioning; ii) factors that have driven WFP strategic decision-making; and iii) performance and results. This CPE is of particular relevance as it concerns a middle-income country (MIC) and comes at a time when a new country strategy document (CSD) and country programme are being prepared.
2. The evaluation was carried out by a team of independent consultants brought together by Mokoro Ltd, with fieldwork in January and March 2013. The main points of reference for the evaluation approach were the five Strategic Objectives from the WFP Strategic Plan (2008–2013); the principal outcomes across the component areas and the cross-cutting themes of the portfolio; and the evaluation questions set out in the terms of reference.
3. The team conducted an in-depth review of available data and documents, semi-structured interviews with informants, focus group discussions with beneficiaries, field visits and observations. The work covered all portfolio component areas and took place in four provinces. A total of 166 informant interviews and 14 focus-group discussions were conducted. Because time and resources were limited and in-country travel to remote locations was restricted, the evaluation team was unable to visit all sites of WFP operations, and field visits were short and intensive. General weaknesses and inconsistencies were found in monitoring and reporting; for closed operations, it was difficult to find beneficiaries or, in some cases, detailed documented evidence of results.

### Context

4. In 2011 the population of the Congo was 4.1 million.<sup>1</sup> Since the ending of the civil war in 1999, the security situation has stabilized. With fast-growing internal revenue – oil accounted for 70 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011 – the country has moved to MIC status.<sup>2</sup> It has the potential to invest in its national development plans, but is constrained by weak national institutions and administration with limited implementation capacity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> WFP development project 200144 – Support to Primary Education.

<sup>2</sup> WFP mid-term evaluation of the safety-net voucher pilot draft (14 January 2013).

<sup>3</sup> “Four Strategic Evaluations on the Transition from Food Aid to Food Assistance: A Synthesis” (OE/2012/S002).

<b>TABLE 1: SELECTED SOCIAL INDICATORS FOR THE CONGO</b>		
<b>Human Development Report indicators 2013</b>		<b>Data (%)</b>
Poverty (percentage of population)	Vulnerable to poverty	17.7
	In severe poverty	22.9
	Below national poverty line	50.1
Contribution of deprivations to overall poverty <sup>4</sup>	Health	45.6
	Education	10.4
	Living standards	44.0
Gender inequality	<i>Human Development Report</i> rank	142 <sup>nd</sup> of 186 countries

Source: UNDP Human Development Report (2013)

5. Over the evaluation period, the country continued to face shocks and longer-term development challenges such as access to quality social services (health, education) and food insecurity. Significant inequalities persist (see Table 1), with half of the population living below the poverty line; the proportion is even higher for the 300,000 ethnic minority pygmy population.<sup>1</sup>
6. The Congo is characterized by high levels of mortality and morbidity, reflecting weaknesses in the country's health system. AIDS remains a leading cause of death among adults, with HIV prevalence about twice as high for women as for men. Cases of tuberculosis (TB) are also on the increase.<sup>5</sup>
7. Nationwide demographic and health surveys conducted in 2005 and 2011/12 reveal a relatively stable nutritional situation for children under 5: stunting slightly decreased from 26 percent to 24 percent, wasting from 7 percent to 6 percent and underweight from 14 percent to 12 percent. Regional and age differences were observed for all three indicators. The level of acute malnutrition range from 12 percent to less than 3 percent across regions. Underweight was more common in rural areas (16 percent) than in urban areas (9 percent).
8. Food insecurity is more prevalent in rural areas, with 15 percent of rural households affected – more than double the national average. Two thirds of the population live in urban areas: the capital, Brazzaville, is a priority for addressing food insecurity, with 20 percent of the absolute number of food-insecure persons.<sup>6</sup> Less than 2 percent of the arable land is cultivated, meaning that agriculture performs below its potential, contributing only 3.8 percent to GDP in 2005. Two thirds of food needs and 94 percent of cereal requirements are imported; as a result, food security is affected by inflation in both rural and urban areas,<sup>6</sup> with particular implications for the poor. Recently, social protection has become an important element of the Government's agenda.

<sup>4</sup> UNDP. 2013. This composite multi-dimensional indicator measures poverty according to the extent of people's deprivations in three areas – education, nutrition and standard of living – each of which has further sub-indicators. The overall indicator provides insight into different types of deprivation and how these are interconnected. It is a more comprehensive indicator than traditional income-based indicators.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization. 2010. Factsheets of health statistics. Geneva.

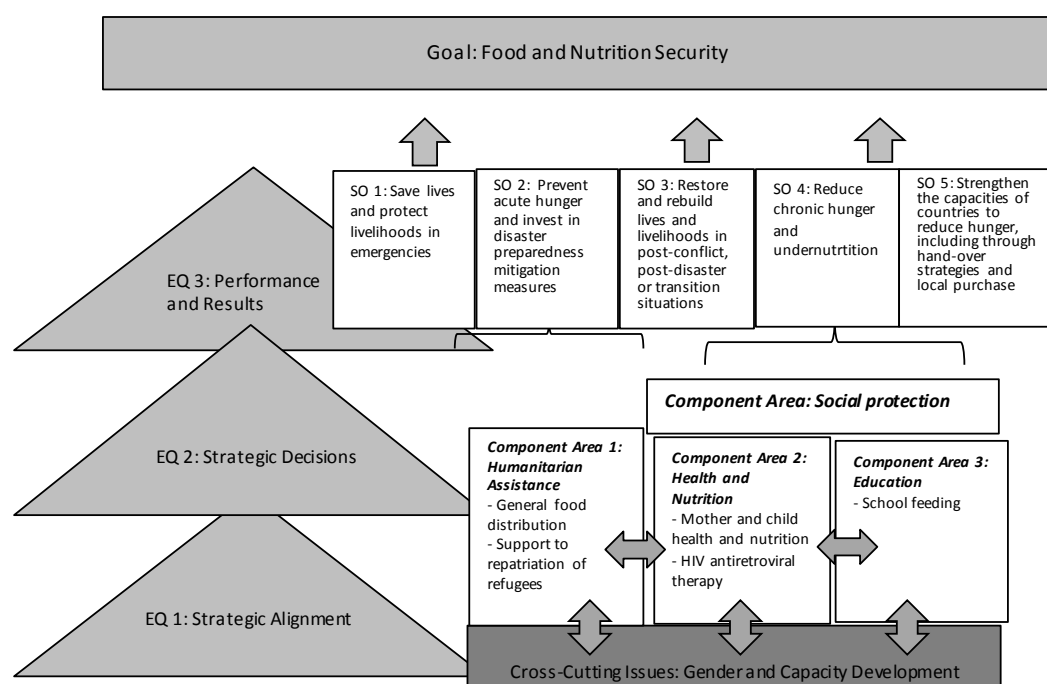
<sup>6</sup> WFP. 2010. *République du Congo – Analyse approfondie de la sécurité alimentaire et de la vulnérabilité*. Available at: <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp223366.pdf> (french only)

9. Since 2000, the Congo has been transitioning from a humanitarian to a development context. However, humanitarian intervention has been required in response to several events, two of which are significant to the CPE. In late 2009 an estimated 115,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo entered the country, requiring both immediate and longer-term assistance. In March 2012, the explosion of an arms depot in Brazzaville devastated the surrounding neighbourhoods and, according to official figures, killed 286 people, injured 3,277 and displaced over 10,000.
10. The Congo is an “aid orphan”: stability and economic growth are making it difficult to attract international aid. Official development assistance (ODA) has fluctuated significantly – from US\$200 million to US\$1.6 billion between 2004 and 2010<sup>7,8</sup> – and remained low as a proportion of GDP.<sup>9</sup> This has influenced the number and capacity of international organizations. Coordination within the aid community occurs only in response to specific needs, as and when required. The Government is keen to continue to engage with development partners and has recently provided funding directly to partners, including WFP.

## WFP's Portfolio and Strategy

11. The CPE divided the portfolio conceptually into four component areas: humanitarian response, nutrition and health, education and social protection (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Evaluation model for the Congo CPE**



<sup>7</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Financial tracking service. <http://fts.unocha.org/>

<sup>8</sup> ODA for the Congo showed a marked increase in 2010; the largest bilateral ODA sector was debt-servicing.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Evaluation Office. 2008. Assessment of development results. Evaluation of UNDP contribution. Republic of the Congo. New York.



12. During the period under review, the WFP country office implemented seven major operations across these component areas, on which the evaluation focused. Operations were progressively refocused on recovery, development and capacity development. Two development operations were initiated in 2011: i) the first focused on the expansion of school feeding in four regions (targeting enrolment and retention, in particular of girls); and ii) the second was a one-year pilot programme to build the Government's capacity to set up safety net programmes that use electronic voucher transfers. Table 2 provides an overview of the country office portfolio under review. The focus of activities has been on emergency general food distributions and support to education.

**TABLE 2: OVERVIEW OF WFP OPERATIONS IN THE CONGO (2009–2012)**

	<b>EMOP 200095</b> Food assistance to DRC refugees in Likouala	<b>PRRO 200147</b> Food assistance to DRC refugees in Likouala	<b>SO 200413</b> Strengthening the logistics capacity of the Government of the Congo to respond to the explosion in Brazzaville	<b>EMOP 200408</b> Food assistance to IDPs from Brazzaville explosion	<b>DEV 200144</b> School feeding (Cuvette, Plateaux and Pool regions)	<b>DEV 200211</b> Safety-net programme (Brazzaville and Pointe Noire)	<b>PRRO 103121</b> Assistance to conflict and poverty affected populations (Pool)
Actual timeframe	1 Jan 2010 – 28 Feb 2011	1 March 2011 – ongoing	31 May – 31 October 2012	March – 31 Aug. 2012	1 Jul 2011 – 31 Dec 2013	1 July 2011 – 30 April 2013	April 2007 – 30 June 2011
Targeted beneficiaries	249 400	210 200	30 trained	25 000	45 000	109	348 983 <sup>a</sup>
Actual beneficiaries	225 114	206 058	25 trained	17 866	109 686	19 200	180 764 <sup>a</sup>
Target tonnage (mt)	27 245	25 698	-	1 249	874	37 929	21 073 <sup>b</sup>
Actual tonnage (mt)	7 020	8 262	-	228	1 757	55	7 920
<b>Total budget appeal (US\$)</b>	<b>33 308 502</b>	<b>33 827 940</b>	<b>450 000</b>	<b>1 464 091</b>	<b>14 241 781</b>	<b>3 579 405</b>	<b>29 145 708<sup>c</sup></b>
% confirmed contributions	55	45	94	98	69	87	50

Source: WFP project documents and Standard Project Reports

<sup>a</sup> Includes only beneficiaries from the evaluation period 2009–2012.

<sup>b</sup> Total target tonnage in 2011.

<sup>c</sup> Refers to project duration 2007–2011.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Alignment and Strategic Positioning

13. The WFP portfolio evolved to respond to both development and humanitarian needs. Overall, geographical and beneficiary coverage matched the main needs. In the humanitarian domain, however, WFP was unable to shift from emergency feeding to save lives to food assistance in support of livelihoods when the context changed, because of the temporary nature of the assistance WFP provided to refugees expected to repatriate.
14. The policy environment evolved with a new National Development Plan and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, alongside work to develop sector-specific policies and plans, although a number of these remain to be formally defined and/or approved. WFP activities corresponded with the priorities expressed in these documents and with

emerging/unwritten policy statements by the Government. In education (school feeding) and social protection WFP engaged with the Government to support ongoing processes of policy development. For the Government, WFP has been a privileged dialogue and implementation partner.

15. The evaluation found that WFP had a comparative advantage in school feeding and its humanitarian work, stemming from its strong field presence and capacity to reach remote areas. In emergency situations WFP also had the capacity to respond quickly. With the reorientation of the portfolio to development work, WFP endeavoured to build a comparative advantage in the field of social protection and had a pioneering role in this respect. The country office also explored market access as part of its school feeding and social protection work. However, WFP's innovative role was not sufficiently matched with technical and operational capacity across portfolio areas. WFP was not perceived by development partners as having a strong comparative advantage in the technical capacity and organizational experience needed for development work.
16. The portfolio was aligned well with WFP corporate objectives, including the shift to food assistance. However, it did not consistently follow the specific guidance provided by WFP policies: in school feeding it did not include the introduction of an essential package; in social protection there was no capacity assessment or gender analysis; in the humanitarian response there was no shift to disaster mitigation; and in nutrition insufficient account was taken of epidemiological data, ensuring adequate levels of ownership, quality monitoring and evaluation, and establishing partnerships.
17. WFP project documents and United Nations development assistance frameworks included plans for alignment with both United Nations and other partners. For the most part, plans were not implemented. The main limiting factors were the small number of development partners, capacity constraints of partners and WFP, weak coordination between the United Nations country team and the Government, coupled with an unclear vision, funding shortfalls and lack of incentives for alignment.

### **Factors and Quality of Strategic Decision-Making**

18. External factors that affected the portfolio included the challenging logistics/transportation situation, the MIC context, the shift from a humanitarian to a development context, government funding capacity and strong interest, the influx of refugees and unforeseen events such as the March 2012 explosion. The main internal factor affecting the portfolio was the funding shortfall. WFP corporate strategies and country office capacities and constraints – inadequate human resources, inconsistent outcome monitoring and limited partnership opportunities – also shaped performance. The country office's entrepreneurial leadership in working with the Government on developing new interventions and exploring new sources of funding was recognized.<sup>10</sup>
19. The country context was characterized by limited analyses and little accurate up-to-date information. WFP used available studies and data to inform decision-making on priorities and programme content, and supplemented this with its own analysis of elements related to the portfolio component areas. Although these studies were relevant, they sometimes missed out on important aspects, affecting coherence in design and implementation. For example, this was reflected in WFP's gender approach, where sensitivity to gender constraints and target group issues was superficial.

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<sup>10</sup> Japan, Brazil and the Government were all new donors to the country during the evaluation period.

20. WFP worked with the Government to help build the national social protection agenda. In education WFP supported efforts to develop a legal framework and guidance on school feeding. National capacity development was a minor, but growing, component of the portfolio and covered all four component areas. Government sectoral capacity in education was built through a visit to the WFP Centre of Excellence in Brazil. Capacity development efforts were not informed by specific analyses of capacity constraints.
21. WFP's technical and operational staff was increased to compensate for gaps identified at the start of the evaluation period. However, with two new development operations in 2011 and emerging work in market analysis, this did not fully meet the needs of the growing portfolio, because of funding shortages and in spite of staff numbers increasing more than originally planned. The planned increased involvement of NGOs in support of implementation did not materialize.
22. Systems to collect monitoring data were put in place across the portfolio and provided a range of output-related data and selected outcome data. This data covered the main aspects by component area and reflected the geographical scope of the portfolio. WFP did not consistently carry out baseline studies. The demands of the pilot and the complexity of conditions were not taken into account in the design of the monitoring system for the safety net programme. Monitoring data were analysed at the operational level to feed into reporting; however, the link between information and decision-making was not always made by either WFP or the Government. Information on outcomes was collected inconsistently, further hampering analysis of effectiveness over time. In the areas of education and social protection, government staff were involved in monitoring, but breaks in information collection and processing affected understanding and decision-making by WFP and by government counterparts.
23. Opportunities for partnership were scarce over the evaluation period given the paucity of potential partners. Selected operational partnerships were entered into across different portfolio components and involved the Government, private sector (in social protection), United Nations agencies (humanitarian) and NGOs (for humanitarian and nutrition work). Partnerships predominantly focused on logistical support for the delivery of food and services. In the later part of the evaluation period partnerships with a more technical focus were established with the Government in social protection and education. In the humanitarian area all partnership agreements were terminated at the end of 2012 for financial reasons and no plans for hand-over were made. The abrupt termination affected food distributions in late 2012 and early 2013.

## Portfolio Performance and Results

24. The evaluation examined efficiency and effectiveness, synergies, impact and sustainability. Across the portfolio there were challenges in reaching the planned number of beneficiaries and in providing regular rations/vouchers that met the established requirements.<sup>11</sup> Portfolio performance was affected by considerable financial shortfalls, accessibility issues, poor transportation capacity of local transporters, procurement difficulties and internal capacity shortfalls affecting monitoring, design and operational planning.

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<sup>11</sup> For example, transfers made through the safety-net programme for the period under review represented less than 15 percent of the planned value; in the refugee operations, 76 percent of planned beneficiaries received 34 percent of the planned tonnage.

⇒ *Humanitarian assistance*

25. During the evaluation period, WFP assisted between 95,100 and 124,700 refugees each year in Likouala province (94 percent of planned beneficiaries). More women than men were reached through general food distributions, which was a reflection of targets set. Across operations there were discrepancies between planned and actual beneficiaries. Distributions were not regular, nor did they consistently provide the planned 30-day ration in terms of either food basket or total calories, with beneficiaries receiving less than half – and in some cases only a quarter – of planned entitlements.
26. At the outcome level, for the refugee operations, studies found improved food security, acceptable food consumption scores, increased diversification of sources of income and lower malnutrition rates. These results could not be attributed entirely to WFP's operations given the lack of baseline data. The rations distributed by WFP were designed to cover 75 percent of the daily requirements according to assessed needs. However, rations distributed were less than planned and refugee populations all reported engaging in other activities to supplement their diets.
27. WFP responded quickly to the explosion in Brazzaville and provided essential coordination for the response. Although the project document originally estimated 25,000 people to be in need of food assistance, WFP served 17,866 people in camps, and not those in host communities. A follow-up review found that the majority of beneficiaries had acceptable food consumption scores.<sup>12</sup> WFP special operation 200413 aimed to increase government capacity in humanitarian logistics. A number of warehouses were established and staff trained, but outcome indicators were neither set nor measured.

⇒ *Health and nutrition*

28. Nutritional support for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) on anti-retroviral treatment (ART) and for TB patients on directly observed treatment was the main nutrition activity in the portfolio. Planned figures for HIV/AIDS and TB patients were surpassed, but the number of beneficiaries reached decreased over the evaluation period from 6,000 in 2009 to less than 1,000 in 2012.
29. Actual beneficiary numbers fell short of plans in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) component, which provided food rations to food-insecure mothers and children; 58.2 percent of the target of 600 was reached. A review of national statistics on the potential beneficiary numbers suggests the target was too high given actual needs and capacities. Reduced achievements were attributed to serious resourcing shortfalls, as was the lower target in 2011.
30. Planned support to malnourished children through two operations did not materialize because of the lack of partner NGOs.
31. For PMTCT, outcome indicators were not recorded and could not be established by the evaluation. For HIV patients on ART, adherence to treatment was very high at 98 percent between 2009 and 2011 and nutritional recovery improved from 90 percent in 2010 to 95 percent in 2011. HIV survival rate at 12 months improved from 75 percent in 2010 to 80 percent in 2011. Outcome indicators changed over the life of the same operation, making a consistent assessment difficult.

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<sup>12</sup> *Enquête de sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle des populations sinistrées par l'explosion de Mpila.* WFP country office assessment report, 2012.

⇒ *Education*

32. School feeding, which provided one cooked meal a day to children in remote rural schools, reached a total of 174,900 primary school children over the four-year period – 72 percent of the target of 241,000. WFP selected areas with poor nutrition indicators. The number of schools assisted by WFP increased from 180 in 2009 – 55 percent of the target – to 342 in 2012 – 98 percent of the target. Community and government involvement in school feeding was an important element of the model.
33. At the outcome level, WFP-supported schools increased enrolment year by year, from 6 percent in 2010 to 25.7 percent in 2012. Enrolment of indigenous children also increased. The ratio of girls to boys in the targeted schools increased from 0.90 in 2008 to 0.95 in 2012; the national gender parity index was 0.90 in 2009. Attendance rates at WFP-supported schools were consistently high throughout the evaluation period.
34. Over the evaluation period, the number of feeding days increased from less than half of school days to over three quarters. The school feeding intervention did not include most of the elements of the Essential Package. The motivation of the voluntary cooks – women who contribute between two and four days a month without remuneration – was affected by the abolition at the beginning of the 2012/13 school year of the food ration they formerly received. Studies were conducted during the evaluation period to develop an understanding of markets and local procurement.
35. At US\$80 per pupil per year in 2012, the school feeding results were achieved at double the average cost globally, reflecting difficult logistics and high transportation costs for implementation.

⇒ *Social protection*

36. The safety net pilot project sought to provide vouchers to over 500 households with pregnant or lactating women and/or with malnourished children under 2.<sup>13</sup> The pilot reached all the intended beneficiary categories, although targets were exceeded in some cases and not reached in others. In 2012, 345 pregnant or lactating women were reached – 68.2 percent of planned.
37. In practice, the conditionality of health visits and education compliance, which was part of the project design and implementation, was not enforced under this pilot programme and no beneficiaries were excluded for not complying with conditions. Programme targeting was partially skewed towards women, and the gender imbalance was increased by men's reluctance to engage with the medical and social services that might have led to their registration for social transfers.
38. For the provision of vouchers, 14.5 percent of the planned amount of funds was transferred during 2012, with only seven of the nine monthly transfers made following the delayed start in April 2012. Numerous operational and logistical problems arose during the pilot period. In months when they actually received the transfer, households experienced a significant addition to their food supply, although data are insufficient to conclude whether their food needs were fully met. Beneficiaries saw the benefits received as strictly temporary, and anticipated a relapse into poverty and poorer nutrition once they ceased.

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<sup>13</sup> Mortality of children under 5 has increased sharply in the Congo over the last decade: 104/1,000 live births in 1990 against 128/1,000 live births in 2009. The 2005 demographic and health survey showed that 70 percent of pregnant women and 60 percent of lactating women were anaemic (WFP DEV 200211, 2011).

39. At the outcome level, it is too early to provide a complete assessment of this pilot. WFP achieved a strong profile in social protection in the Congo by identifying an area of strategic development that was highly relevant to the needs of the largely impoverished population. The project did not include measures to help beneficiaries achieve resilient and sustainable livelihoods, such as transferring skills in the development of income-generating activities. Operationally, WFP and its government and private-sector partners did not have the human resources or the systems to implement or assess results of this activity adequately, even on a pilot scale.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Main Lessons for the Future

40. This section identifies lessons from the evaluation period that may be of relevance to the next period of engagement as well as to WFP more broadly.
- Small offices in MICs where funding from host countries may be possible have potential for innovation and for piloting new approaches that can feed into the wider organizational knowledge base.
  - Progress at the policy level must be substantiated by solid operational performance. In the context of MICs, decisions on objectives need to be balanced with considerations about staffing needs and other inputs that will determine the quality and quantity of outputs. As a major funder, the Government may require more evidence of effectiveness and efficiency of operations.
  - There is a need for better coordination between corporate policy making and support given to the implementation of country portfolios to ensure that policies receive attention in design and, particularly, in implementation. Attention should also be given to allowing field implementation to feed back into policy formulation.
  - The experience of the safety net programme, set up without a strategy for phasing out and/or providing beneficiaries with continuity, underscores broader issues of programme design for WFP: developing efficient and effective social protection programmes requires consistent, well-managed effort for much longer than 12 months. Operational complexities, the length of the learning curve and the need for technical skill and effective coordination should not be underestimated. From the beneficiaries' perspective, social protection should build long-term resilience into livelihoods, not just provide short-term support. This is also true of WFP's humanitarian programming, which should place greater emphasis on livelihoods and on disaster preparedness and mitigation.

### Overall Assessment

41. **Relevance.** WFP operations were appropriately targeted to geographic areas and to specific groups. WFP's portfolio has evolved, shown continued relevance, and been well adjusted to needs and to government priorities. WFP operations were well aligned with the evolving humanitarian and development needs of the people. WFP also aligned itself well with the broad emerging policy frameworks of the Government, as formulated in the National Development Programme and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, and with existing sectoral strategies. In education and social protection, WFP engaged strategically with the Government to support ongoing processes of policy development. The country office also initiated exploratory work on market analysis and local procurement.

42. **Efficiency.** WFP performed below expectations, with fewer beneficiaries reached than planned for most operations. WFP reacted rapidly in the case of emergencies, and overall it was efficient in the initial response. However, across the portfolio, weaknesses in design, planning, implementation and monitoring resulted in beneficiaries receiving irregular or incomplete entitlements. A major constraint on WFP's achievement of outputs was that its ambitious evolving agenda was not matched with sufficient resources for implementation. In the latter period, when activities were predominantly funded by the Government, efficiency constraints existed mainly in the area of non-financial resources, which were not adjusted to the changing needs of the portfolio or the context.
43. **Effectiveness.** In the humanitarian domain, improvements were recorded in the nutritional status of refugee populations but it was not possible to establish whether they could be attributed to WFP activities. There is evidence that nutritional support brought improved nutritional recovery and HIV survival rates for PLWHA, and that it was associated with higher TB treatment adherence and completion rates. However, no data were available for other nutrition-related work (PMTCT and attendance at health clinics by pregnant or lactating women). In education, WFP-supported schools saw an increase in enrolment and attendance and an improvement in gender parity, compared with baselines. It is too early to make an informed assessment of the effectiveness of the safety net programme.
44. **Impact and sustainability.** Shortcomings related to its analysis work – lack of baselines, change of monitoring indicators, inconsistent outcome monitoring, unfilled gaps – gave WFP only a partial understanding of the contribution of food assistance to the food and nutrition status of the population, and of the strategies and interventions that worked best and what made them work. Nonetheless, the close alignment of WFP operations with government priorities, the increasing government involvement in programming and implementation, and the expanded government funding of WFP's operations, constituted important steps toward sustainability. These aspects received attention during the evaluation period and were part of the country office strategy.

## Recommendations

45. The evaluation report findings and conclusions led the evaluation team to propose the following recommendations, formulated to feed into the CSD finalization process.
46. **Recommendation 1: Conduct an independent formative evaluation of the safety net programme to inform the planned scale-up and identify priorities and strategies for continued support to this area as one of the main components of the new CSD.**
47. Given that social protection is a government priority, the independent evaluation, which will also provide input to recommendation 7, should identify how the safety net programme can be effectively adjusted and set out the monitoring and evaluation plan. (Country office, with support from the Johannesburg Regional Bureau (OMJ) and Headquarters)
48. **Recommendation 2: As part of the immediate implementation of school feeding, the country office, in collaboration with partners, should identify elements of the Essential Package that it is realistic to roll out in the current programme on a pilot basis, in line with corporate guidance, and to roll out progressively to all WFP-supported schools within the new CSD period.**

49. School feeding is a government priority and will continue to be a major component of the CSD. Ensuring attention is given to school health, nutrition and other aspects of the Essential Package will enhance the effectiveness of these interventions and ensure that school feeding is aligned with corporate WFP policy. (Country office)
50. **Recommendation 3: Before the 2013/14 school year, the country office, in cooperation with the Government and the International Partnership for Human Development, should review the current approach to community cooks and ensure that appropriate compensation is provided in line with WFP school feeding policy, harmonized among partners and proposed for inclusion in the Government's school feeding strategy.**
51. The involvement of community members is an essential aspect of the school feeding strategy. Partners for school feeding have followed different approaches in providing compensation for food preparation. This is not always understood by communities and the amount of time volunteered – 2–4 full days per month – puts a substantial burden on women in poor communities. A harmonized approach would respect the principles of community participation and fair compensation. (Country office)
52. **Recommendation 4: Ensure the humanitarian assistance component under the new CSD includes capacity development of the Government and operational partners, especially in the area of disaster mitigation and preparedness.**
53. In line with the sharper focus on development in the evolving context of the country, the new CSD should ensure stronger links between the humanitarian and development components of the portfolio through the inclusion of specific strategies for capacity development in disaster mitigation and preparedness. (Country office)
54. **Recommendation 5: The new CSD, while addressing both humanitarian and development needs, should prioritize capacity development and knowledge transfer; include a transition road map for further increasing government responsibility and takeover of funding; and contain explicit commitments and strategies for enhancing coordination efforts by the Government.**
55. Paving the way to sustainability, a medium- to long-term transition/hand-over plan with set milestones should be agreed upon with the Government. The new CSD should include explicit commitments to: i) support the Government in developing policy and coordinating the activities and inputs of its development partners, and ii) play a prominent role in structures and processes for coordination among United Nations agencies in the country, in areas where WFP has an established and emerging comparative advantage: humanitarian assistance, school feeding and social protection. (Country office, with support from OMJ and Headquarters)
56. **Recommendation 6: Develop a joint WFP–Government capacity development plan for the priority areas in the new CSD and ensure its inclusion in the detailed planning for component implementation.**
57. This capacity development plan should outline priorities across the component areas and clearly indicate where WFP will provide inputs. The priorities identified should be included in WFP's internal planning process (recommendation 7), and in the implications for funding to be discussed with the Government (recommendation 10). (Country office, with support from OMJ)
58. **Recommendation 7: Under the framework of the annual performance plan, develop an implementation plan in 2014 for each area of the new CSD that maximizes alignment with WFP and government policies; identifies partners, strategies and**



**targets; strengthens monitoring, and specifies appropriate human resource and funding needs.**

59. This exercise should provide the basis for the implementation of the portfolio and allow for planning of resource needs (recommendations 8 and 10). For each component, it should:
- build on the findings of the present evaluation, in particular with reference to gender, social protection and capacity development, and seek to improve alignment with WFP policies;
  - include strategies and targets for both policy and operational aspects of the portfolio;
  - identify opportunities for partnerships and strategies to optimize these, giving specific attention to technical, non-logistical areas;
  - formulate strategies that allow for streamlining and improving the monitoring systems; and
  - identify implications for staffing and resource needs.
60. This process should be carried out with the involvement of the Government and implementing partners, and the recommendations should be reflected in country office programming. (Country office, with support from OMJ and Headquarters)
61. **Recommendation 8: Conduct a review of country office staffing needs in light of the CSD priorities in social protection, market analysis, and disaster preparedness and mitigation.**
62. Draw up a staffing plan for the CSD period that will allow the country office, within each of the component areas, to: i) adequately respond to requirements; ii) increase effectiveness and efficiency; and iii) play a stronger technical assistance/advisory role in its engagement with the Government. This should equip the country office with a fit-for-purpose team and adequate staffing level to analyse strategic opportunities, while achieving efficient performance in the conventional management functions. Attention should be given to securing the appropriate skills sets in the team, both national and international, in core component areas of the portfolio, which are:
- social protection, including education/school feeding;
  - market analysis for local purchases and urban vouchers; and
  - humanitarian response and disaster preparedness and mitigation.
63. This would allow WFP to provide more substantial input to national dialogue and coordination, and support the implementation of the portfolio through strong technical input in appropriate areas. Outputs from recommendations 6 and 7 would contribute to the staffing profile. (Headquarters, OMJ and country office)
64. **Recommendation 9: Before the implementation of the new CSD, conduct a comprehensive review of the country office monitoring and reporting practices, based on the new Strategic Results Framework, to strengthen links between data collection, analysis and use of data for decision-making.**

65. This should include: i) redoubling efforts to make sure all monitoring is done comprehensively and accurately to generate full data sets; ii) ensuring that all project monitoring is done in partnership with the Government and/or NGOs; and iii) planning and implementing external evaluations at appropriate times in project cycles. (Country office, with support from OMJ)
66. **Recommendation 10: Draw up a funding strategy from 2014 onwards to support advocacy with the Government as to the funding of operations and staff in line with the agreed CSD and transition plan.**
67. The strategy for continued and scaled-up funding of WFP operations by the Government should be in line with the agreed transition road map (see recommendation 5) so that by the end of the CSD period the bulk of the technical positions are funded by the Government. The plan should be based on the detailed planning for components (see recommendation 7) and staffing needs (see recommendation 8). It should also identify how the monitoring of operations – outputs, outcomes and achievements of the programme – will be reported back to the Government to provide the rationale for continued support (see recommendation 9). (Country office, with support from OMJ and Headquarters)

## ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

ART	anti-retroviral treatment
C&V	cash and vouchers
CPE	country portfolio evaluation
CSD	country strategy document
DEV	development programme
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EMOP	emergency operation
FFA	food for assets
FFT	food for training
FFW	food for work
GDP	gross domestic product
IDP	internally displaced person
IR-EMOP	immediate response emergency operation
MIC	middle-income country
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	official development assistance
OMJ	Johannesburg Regional Bureau (Southern Africa)
PLWHA	people living with HIV/AIDS
PMTCT	prevention of mother-to-child transmission
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SO	special operation
SPR	Standard Project Report
TB	tuberculosis
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme