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Summary Evaluation Report – Burundi Country Portfolio (2011–2015)

Executive Summary

This country portfolio evaluation covered WFP's portfolio in Burundi, with four operations from 2011 to 2015 and the 2011–2014 country strategy. It assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning; the factors and quality of its strategic decision-making; and the performance and results of the portfolio as a whole.

Burundi is a low-income, food-deficit, land-locked and densely populated country, ranking 184th of 188 countries in the 2015 Human Development Report. Internal conflict, political uncertainty and weak institutional foundations have constrained economic development. With the highest levels of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa approximately 3 million of Burundi's 11 million population were food-insecure in 2014, and an additional 4 million experienced marginal or limited food security. Undernutrition is a major problem.

In 2011, the optimistic vision that prevailed among government and United Nations Development Assistance Framework partners envisaged a gradual return to lasting peace and development. Based on thorough context analysis at that time and past experience, the WFP country strategy identified three priorities: i) food and nutrition security; ii) capacity development of government institutions; and, commendably, iii) humanitarian response. Capacity development was implemented as cross-cutting support. However, following the violently contested presidential elections of 2015, Burundi stands at a cross-roads of uncertainty over whether long-term development will resume or instability deteriorate further. Major donors have suspended direct financial support to the Government.

The evaluation found that WFP was widely appreciated for its expertise in food assistance, policy support, flexibility and transparency. At a strategic level, stakeholders perceived WFP as a leading and influential partner, diligently applying its comparative advantages in general food assistance, vulnerability analysis and mapping, disaster response, logistics, and innovations such as Purchase for Progress. Strategic choices were influenced by WFP's mandate, the national context and

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policies, the shift from food aid to food assistance, and the availability of funds. Overall, WFP's portfolio, including large-scale general food assistance, was relevant, effective, timely and aligned with humanitarian principles. A number of national policies and strategies were also successfully developed with WFP's assistance. The evaluation found some evidence that WFP contributed to increased enrolment and attendance in assisted schools while achieving lower drop-out rates and gender parity, but there were insufficient data to assess the effectiveness of nutrition interventions. Promising results were found in smaller-scale community recovery and development activities, and Purchase for Progress injected a significant amount of cash – USD 4.75 million – into the local economy. WFP responded effectively to the 2014 flooding emergency through life-saving assistance. However, coupled with weak synergies and integration, serious funding shortfalls affected performance, results and sustainability throughout the portfolio, involving trade-offs between increasing beneficiary coverage and reducing the quantities and duration of food assistance distributed.

The evaluation makes nine recommendations: refocusing WFP's food assistance on food and nutrition security and emergency preparedness and response, based on proactive strengthening of synergies; improving targeting and programme integration; enhancing women's economic empowerment; expanding carefully designed safety nets incorporating humanitarian and protection principles into WFP's strategic and programme documents; supporting development of a national strategy for stunting reduction; strengthening school feeding; promoting community resilience with comprehensive food assistance-for-assets packages; enhancing resource mobilization; and improving the consistency of outcome monitoring and analysis.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report – Burundi Country Portfolio (2011–2015)” (WFP/EB.2/2016/6-A) and the management response in WFP/EB.2/2016/6-A/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. Selected as part of the ongoing cycle of country portfolio evaluations (CPEs) managed by the Office of Evaluation (OEV), this CPE covered WFP's portfolio of operations in Burundi from 2011 to 2015, and the 2011–2014 country strategy (CS). Conducted by an independent evaluation team, the CPE assessed WFP's alignment and strategic positioning; the factors and quality of its strategic decision-making; and the performance and results of the portfolio as a whole. After extensive document review, fieldwork took place in April 2016, including interviews with 350 stakeholders from WFP, national authorities, donors, partners and beneficiaries. In addition, 38 schools, health centres, refugee camps and social institutions were visited. There has been no previous evaluation of WFP's portfolio in Burundi.¹

Context

2. Burundi is a low-income, land-locked country with per capita gross national income of USD 758.² Agriculture is the backbone of the economy, accounting for 90 percent of the population's income.³ Internal conflict, political uncertainty and weak institutional foundations have constrained economic development. The 2015 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) ranked Burundi 184th of 188 countries. Estimated at 11 million, the population has been growing by 3.51 percent a year, and population density is the second highest in sub-Saharan Africa.⁴ Gender inequality is a major contributing factor to food insecurity; Burundi was classified 109th of 155 countries in the Gender Inequality Index.⁵ With the highest levels of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa,⁶ approximately 3 million – 32 percent – of Burundi's population were food-insecure in 2014, with an additional 4 million experiencing marginal or limited food security.⁷ Malnutrition is a major problem, with very high stunting prevalence of 58 percent and an underweight rate of 29 percent.⁸
3. During the evaluation period, the Government pursued assertive development-oriented policies shaped by its Vision 2025 and two successive poverty reduction strategy papers comprising the three pillars of good governance, economic development and access to basic services. Although heavily dependent on international assistance from very few donors, Burundi recorded an average annual economic growth rate of 4 percent until early 2015. Since then, the contested presidential election has triggered civil unrest, economic stagnation and an outflow of a quarter of a million Burundians seeking refuge in neighbouring countries amid reported widespread human rights violations.⁹ Major donors have suspended direct financial support to the Government. Burundi now stands at a cross-roads of uncertainty regarding whether long-term development will resume or instability deteriorate further.

¹ The previous protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) and the current country programme (CP) were reviewed in a country-led mid-term review in 2013.

² <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BDI>

³ <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/burundi/burundi-economic-outlook> – 2014.

⁴ <http://countrymeters.info/en/Burundi>

⁵ UNDP. 2015. *Human Development Report 2015*.

⁶ International Food Policy Research Institute. 2014. *Global Hunger Index 2014*.

⁷ WFP. 2014. *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis 2014*.

⁸ The World Health Organization (WHO) threshold for “very high/alarming” stunting is 40 percent. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2014. *The State of the World's Children 2015*, p. 42.

⁹ See full evaluation report, page 8, paragraph 23.

WFP Country Strategy and Portfolio

4. Building on 48 years of WFP presence in Burundi, the 2011 CS articulated WFP's role as a supporting partner to the Government in facilitating Burundi's move towards lasting peace and sustainable improvement of nutrition and food security. Reflecting the optimistic development vision that prevailed in the Government and among partners in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), WFP's CS identified three priorities: i) food and nutrition security;¹⁰ ii) capacity development of government institutions; and iii) humanitarian response action. As illustrated in Figure 1, WFP implemented a portfolio comprising a CP (2011–2016), PRRO 200164 and PRRO 200655, ending in 2016, and the short-term immediate-response emergency operation (IR-EMOP) 200678.
5. While the CP aimed to support the Government's development and new education policy, the PRROs were launched to enable the transition from emergency support to recovery and reflected WFP's shift from food aid to food assistance. The CP and PRROs continued to provide the operational framework for WFP's assistance even after the context declined from April 2015.

Figure 1: WFP Burundi country portfolio summary, 2011–2015

Operation	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015								
	External events			Flooding February 2014	Political unrest April 2015								
CP 200119 (2011–2016)	Req: 105,366,484 Rec: 52,271,399		Funded: 50% (as of Dec. 2015)										
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th colspan="2">LEGEND</th> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Funding Level</td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Between 50 and 75%</td> <td style="background-color: #cccccc;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Less than 50%</td> <td style="background-color: #cccccc;"></td> </tr> </table>					LEGEND		Funding Level		Between 50 and 75%		Less than 50%	
LEGEND													
Funding Level													
Between 50 and 75%													
Less than 50%													
PRRO 200655 – Assistance for Refugees and Vulnerable Food-Insecure Populations (2014–2016)			Req: 69,753,058 Rec: 29,391,288 Funded: 42% (as of Dec. 2015)										
IR-EMOP 200678 – Emergency Assistance to Victims of Flooding (February–May 2014)			Req: 1,361,213 Rec: 687,101 Funded: 50%										
PRRO 200164 – Assistance to Refugees, Returnees and Vulnerable Food-Insecure Populations (2011–2014)	Req: 98,480,619 Rec: 63,840,369 Funded: 65%												

Sources: Standard Project Reports (SPRs) 2011–2015; Resource Situation Updates for December 2015 for CP 200119 and PRRO 200655. Req = requirements; Rec = contributions received. Figures in US dollars.

Evaluation Findings

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

6. The themes of the CS and the corresponding portfolio were relevant to the identified needs of the population and aligned with WFP corporate policy objectives and government priorities. The first CS (2011–2014) in Burundi, which WFP saw as a “challenge for innovation”, reflected optimistic perspectives towards development, taking into account WFP's comparative advantages. The evaluation found widespread appreciation among stakeholders for WFP's expertise in food assistance, policy support, flexibility and transparency. The country office was renowned for

¹⁰ The objectives of the CS were to: i) address chronic hunger and undernutrition among children, pregnant and lactating women and other vulnerable groups; ii) address hunger in school-age children and support their education; and iii) reduce vulnerability to acute undernutrition and rebuild food and nutrition security in households and communities affected by shocks, through community recovery and development.

its capacity to act as a catalyst in innovative endeavours, and maintained excellent relations with stakeholders including ministries, United Nations partners, donors and non-governmental organizations, at all levels, reinforced by its extensive field presence.

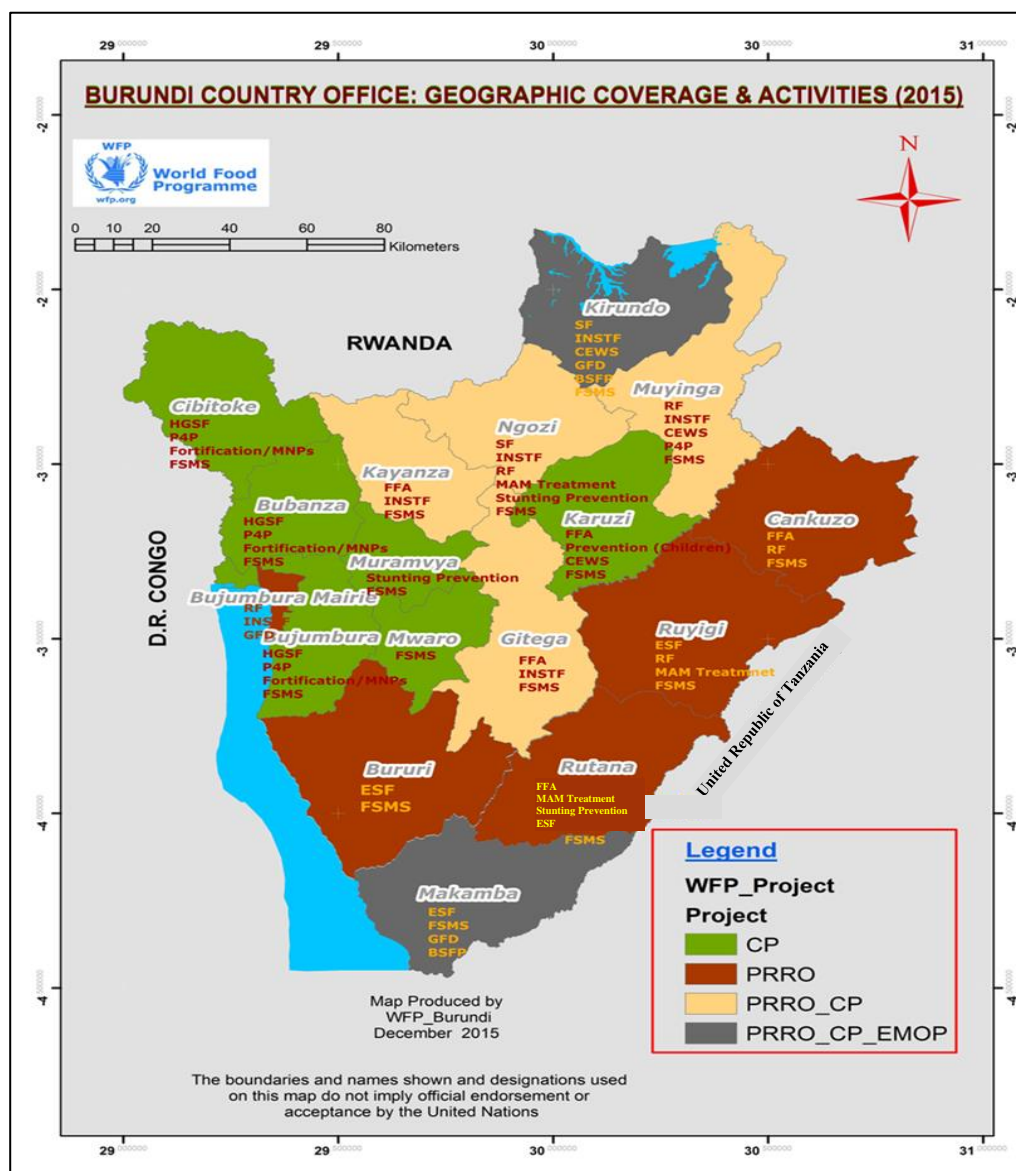
7. The CS was coherent with the priorities of a wide range of United Nations partners and donors. WFP actively participated in UNDAF processes, which were reported as being transparent and harmonized with national development priorities, such as poverty reduction strategy papers. Considering the recurrent climatic shocks and the fragile wider context for food security, the country office should be commended for insisting on including an emergency response component in the CS and the UNDAF despite the optimistic spirit at the time of their design. The country office also identified activities where synergies with partner United Nations agencies were expected.

Factors and Quality of Strategic Decision-Making

8. The decision-making process for formulation of the CS was well documented, mitigating the limited “institutional memory” within the country office that resulted from staff turnover over the CS period. Strategic decision-making was both policy-led and practical. The main factors influencing it were: i) WFP’s mandate; ii) the national context and policies; iii) WFP’s strategic shift from food aid to food assistance; and iv) funding availability.
9. The country office analysed the political, security and socio-economic context thoroughly, based on its own expertise, comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis from 2008, internal studies¹¹ and external analyses from partners including UNDP and the World Bank. Lessons learned, comparative advantages and challenges were also appropriately analysed. To the extent that lessons from other countries could be applied in Burundi, Brazil and Côte d’Ivoire were considered as references for school feeding, and Kenya for Purchase for Progress (P4P).
10. In 2011–2012, operational design and activities were geographically and conceptually separate, as programming did not integrate portfolio activities to achieve catalytic effects (Figure 2). In 2013, the country office introduced significant revisions including in: i) CP 200119, to integrate school feeding with P4P and home-grown school feeding in three northwestern provinces, and to introduce the use of vouchers in refugee camps; ii) PRRO 200164, was revised to synchronize supplementary feeding, school feeding and food assistance for assets (FFA) with the 18-month reintegration plan for returnees from the United Republic of Tanzania, as requested by the Government; and iii) PRRO 200655, revision when the 2015 emergency food security assessment triggered an increase in targeted food assistance.

¹¹ These included analysis of hunger and nutrition in Burundi; the framework for WFP’s national partnerships; a cash and voucher study on market and trader information; the country office’s nutrition strategy for 2011–2014; the mid-term review of PRRO 10528; and a draft resource strategy.

Figure 2: Geographical coverage and activities of the Burundi country office, 2015



BSFP – Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme
 CEWS – Continental Early Warning System
 ESF – emergency school feeding
 FSMS – Food Security Monitoring System
 GFD – general food distribution
 HGSF – home-grown school feeding
 INSTF – institutional feeding
 MNP – micronutrient powder
 RF – refugee feeding
 SF – school feeding

11. The evaluation found no evidence of internal duplications of geographical targeting, but gaps remained in coordination and coherence among activities. First, there was a lack of synergy between support to the national disaster risk reduction (DRR) platform in setting up a countrywide strategic approach to natural disaster mitigation and response, and the FFA anti-erosion activities implemented in eastern provinces, which were more affected by climate change-related shocks than western and southern provinces. Second, given the need for stronger coordination between the CP and PRROs, school feeding selection criteria were not sufficiently and coherently applied. Third, resource and capacity constraints led to inconsistent and thinly scattered implementation of activities.

Portfolio Performance and Results

Targeting

12. Based on a transparent community participatory approach, beneficiary targeting criteria were well defined for all groups. Criteria were relevant¹² and suitably flexible for potentially large-scale coverage of beneficiaries, such as returnees. Targeting also relied on guidance from specialized partners, including WHO and the Ministry of Education for school feeding and nutrition activities. However, the targeting of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) treatment did not correspond fully to international guidance¹³ and was influenced by government requests to bridge the time needed to roll out the National Integrated Nutrition Programme. Overall, because of funding shortfalls and the low implementation capacity of partners, some activities were sparsely dispersed across geographical areas. Targeting of some schools under the CP was unclear.
13. Table 1 shows total planned and actual beneficiaries for the portfolio in the evaluation period. Of an aggregate planned target of 4.3 million people, WFP provided food assistance to 3.6 million in northern, northeastern and southern parts of Burundi. Of the total required budget of USD 287 million, only USD 175.4 million was received.

Year	Planned	Actual	Actual vs. planned (%)
2011	628 650	702 041	112
2012	674 330	629 076	93
2013	835 800	647 213	77
2014	1 022 084	865 308	85
2015	1 105 559	791 134	72
TOTAL	4 266 423	3 634 772	85

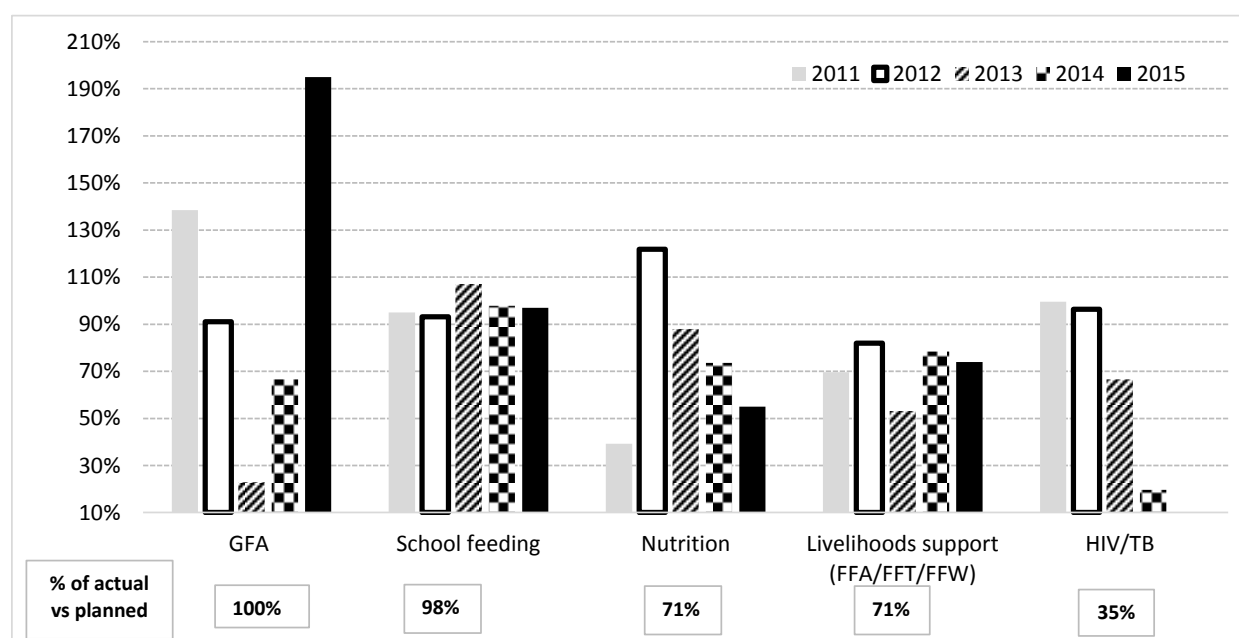
Sources: SPRs 2011–2015.

14. In response to the combined effects of increasing food needs and funding shortfalls, the country office adjusted initial targets, some of which were overestimates,¹⁴ and reduced the duration and quantities of some food ration deliveries, to less than 2,100 kcal per day. The negative impact on beneficiary coverage was mitigated by introduction of home-grown school feeding and P4P.

¹² Based on school enrolment rates, stunting rates and levels of food insecurity, poverty, vulnerability and global acute malnutrition.

¹³ MAM treatment should commence when the global acute malnutrition (wasting) rate exceeds 10 percent, or 8 percent with aggravating conditions such as displacement, civil unrest, disease outbreak or other destabilizing factors. Stunting prevention is recommended in any situation where stunting rates exceed 30 percent. As noted in paragraph 2, the stunting rate in Burundi was 58 percent.

¹⁴ 2014 SPR for PRRO 200164. The target for supplementary feeding of pregnant and lactating women was not achieved because planning targets were overestimates. As no recent data were available during development of the PRRO, beneficiary needs were estimated based on the 2010 Health and Demographic Survey, which reported MAM prevalence of 16 percent versus the 3.5 percent assessed by the February 2014 Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) survey.

Figure 3: Percentages of beneficiaries reached against targets, by activity, 2011–2015

Sources: SPRs 2011–2015.

FFT = food assistance for training; FFW = food assistance for work; GFA = general food assistance; TB = tuberculosis.

Food and nutrition security

15. As Figure 3 shows, in 2011 and 2012, the country office effectively met or exceeded planned targets in school feeding, GFA, FFA and HIV/TB, with fluctuating performance in nutrition. However, in later years, its ability to meet planned targets declined.
16. *School feeding* activities met 98 percent of planned targets and provided children with daily hot meals for 9.5 months of each school year, although this was reduced to 6 months during funding shortfalls. Performance was stable. Under the CP, the number of children provided with school meals increased from 186,869 in 2012, to 315,823 in 2013 and 440,427 in 2014, mostly due to the linkage of home-grown school feeding to P4P. WFP introduced fuel-efficient stoves in more than 140 schools.
17. Aimed at addressing hunger in school-aged children and supporting their education, WFP school feeding included four outcome targets for assisted schools: i) 6 percent increase in enrolment rates in 80 percent of assisted schools; ii) attendance rates reaching at least 90 percent; iii) gender parity; and iv) drop-out rates of no more than 3 percent. The evaluation found that the programme contributed to increased enrolment and attendance in assisted schools, with lower drop-outs and gender parity. Statistics from the Ministry of Education indicated better completion rates in provinces where WFP was active, but the specific contribution of school feeding could not be attributed. It was not possible to verify whether increased enrolment rates were a result of pull factors drawing children from nearby schools where there were no canteens, as there were no data on this effect. In addition, the large increase in class size, from 50 to 80 children, was bound to affect education quality – a crucial factor for Burundi's peace and long-term development.

18. *Nutrition.* The objective of nutrition activities was to improve nutritional outcomes for children under 5 years of age and pregnant and lactating women in five of the most vulnerable target provinces. The programme approach included: i) MAM treatment; ii) MAM prevention; and iii) stunting prevention through blanket feeding for 12,700 vulnerable children aged 6–23 months. WFP provided nutrition assistance to 412,761 children and pregnant and lactating women – meeting 71 percent of the planned target; and to 10,231 people living with HIV on anti-retroviral therapy – 35 percent. It also provided training in stunting prevention to 33 health promotion technicians and 1,582 community health workers. Performance in meeting coverage targets fluctuated (Figure 3).
19. The food security outcomes monitoring of November 2014 showed that the proportion of children consuming an acceptable diet increased by 100 percent after five months of food distribution. However, in 2011–2014, monitoring activities were often lacking in quality and quantity. The effectiveness of MAM activities during this period could not be determined because relevant outcome data were not available. As shown in Table 2, benchmarks for performance indicators became visible only in 2015, after WFP increased its efforts to monitor interventions.

Indicator	Benchmark (%)	Performance in 2015 (%)
Cure rate	> 75	90.0
Non-respondent	< 10	5.0
Abandoned	< 15	5.0
Died	< 3	0.4
Transferred	< 10	4.4

Source: Country office programme data.

20. With the reinforced presence of WFP field monitors mitigating serious staffing shortages in health centres, MAM treatment followed the national protocol in 2015. However, food rations were reported as being frequently shared among all family members, or sold, and treatment was not systematically combined with nutrition education and gender empowerment, thus making it a short-term solution.
21. Funding shortages constrained systematic and consistent application of the first 1,000 days window of opportunity for enhancing nutrition outcomes among young children, and food packages varied. As piloting of the stunting prevention activity started only in 2015, it was too early to assess evidence of the effectiveness of the blanket feeding approach in preventing stunting. In addition, the limited operational presence of UN-Women and the United Nations Population Fund was not conducive to synergies, for example with the One UN initiative among WFP, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WHO.
22. *GFA/cash-based transfers (CBTs).* Overall, GFA was provided to 953,376 internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and vulnerable households, of whom 165,288 benefited from CBTs. However, performance by year was erratic, as shown in Figure 3. WFP supported the implementation of a national social protection programme, contributing its experience in vulnerability assessment, targeting and CBTs. The growing consequences of current crises and the increasing need for safety nets for the most vulnerable people resulted in the need to locate WFP’s GFA within the national social protection framework. The country office was flexible in using different transfer modalities, but stakeholders’ opinions regarding the appropriateness of these food assistance transfer modalities varied. Beneficiaries reported improvements in the quality of feedback and complaints mechanisms using smartphones for quick reporting and feedback regarding voucher transfers. Post-distribution monitoring in 2015 showed that the introduction of CBTs in refugee camps provided refugees with access to fresh food and diversified diet.

23. *P4P* activities were introduced in 2013 and aimed to connect smallholder farmers to markets, reduce post-harvest losses, and transform food assistance into a productive investment in local communities. Focusing largely on local food purchase of 20,032 mt, P4P supported almost 14,000 farmers in cooperatives. Review of programme records shows that P4P has generated a significant amount of cash in the local economy, valued at USD 4.75 million. However, from available data, it was not possible to identify who had benefited, and gender-disaggregated data on income changes were not available. WFP provided training in market access and post-harvest equipment to improve food warehouse management in the 39 cooperatives supported by P4P, enabling them to meet adequate post-harvest handling and quality standards.
24. *Community recovery and development.* With the objective of restoring, building and enhancing community resilience to shocks, WFP supported 242,029 participants in FFA activities such as construction of feeder roads and erosion protection – considered highly relevant in Burundi. Performance was stable but activities reached only a relatively low 71 percent of planned coverage. Monitoring data indicated that FFA projects in the context of the WFP/International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) anti-erosion programme (*Programme de développement des filières – PRODEFI*) were effective in improving children’s nutrition in targeted communities, when combined with other – non-FFA – activities delivered in synergy with those of other partners. Community asset scores were not measured consistently, but indicated an improvement from 58 to 63 percent – the target was 80 percent.¹⁵ A final evaluation¹⁶ in June 2015 showed that the proportion of people with poor food consumption scores had decreased by 7 percent and the adoption of harmful coping strategies by 5 percent. However, activities did not achieve a truly holistic resilience approach, which would have included sensitization on gender-based violence and fuel efficiency, for example.

Capacity development

25. *Capacity development* activities aimed to develop government capacities to formulate and implement national food security strategies. WFP contributed to Burundi’s first Forum on Nutrition and Food Security in 2011, and to policy formulation for food fortification, school feeding, community development, gender and the DRR platform. Capacity development was implemented as a cross-cutting intervention, consistent with the Strategic Plan 2014–2017. Support from the country office was relatively small in scale and insufficiently frequent. No programme officer was assigned to this important CS priority. Stakeholders assessed results in provincial DRR platforms as moderately effective, while institutional capacities remained weak.

Humanitarian emergency response

26. The objective of this CS priority was to save lives and address acute undernutrition among refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in four camps, returnees, IDPs and vulnerable households whose food and nutrition security was affected by disasters. In 2014, the country office effectively delivered 418 mt of food assistance to 22,160 IDPs affected by flooding, through IR-EMOP 200678. However, the response did not ensure linkages with recovery and sustainability activities. The country office diligently applied its logistical capacity for humanitarian response as a strong comparative advantage.

Efficiency

27. The CS described the timeliness of WFP response as a challenge. The evaluation assessed that despite some operational delays in food dispatches and delivery, overall, WFP’s delivery of assistance was timely. However, there were trade-offs between increasing beneficiary coverage and reducing the quantities of food distributed and the duration of distributions. Despite prior consultation with refugees on the timing of food distributions, women members of refugee committees reported delays at the beginning of the month, which contributed to growing

¹⁵ SPR PRRO 200655.

¹⁶ Commissioned by the country office.

debts for some households, a concern that was also expressed by cooperating partners. Under P4P, late collection of crops entailed additional storage costs for participating farmers. The country office's analysis comparing local purchases with imported food concluded that local purchases were relatively cost-efficient, reflecting Burundi's geography and infrastructure.

Gender

28. The country office considered gender issues as cross-cutting, but the CS did not explicitly elaborate these issues. Analysis of gender in food security issues was limited, even though pressure on land has been putting women at risk of destitution, and gender-based violence is a critical issue in Burundi. WFP collaborated with the Ministry of National Solidarity as a strategic partner in enhancing gender and protection commitments. During 2012–2015, women covered 50 percent of positions in food management committees, increasing their influence in the management of GFA. WFP adopted a more holistic approach to gender in the most recent PRRO 200655, both in its contextual descriptions of women living on marginal lands, women's lower education levels and gender roles in nutrition and FFA activities, and in its programme priorities, supported by gender-disaggregated data.

Partnerships

29. The CS and portfolio design considered several categories of partners. Some of the envisaged synergies materialized only partially at the operational level. On the positive side, WFP implemented FFA activities in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, IFAD and World Vision, and the school feeding programme in partnership with the Government's Ministry of Education and Welthungerhilfe. However, stronger synergies and coordination were needed with other United Nations partners, including in nutrition, and with UNICEF in school feeding, especially concerning quality of education.

Humanitarian principles and protection

30. WFP policy requires supporting the protection of crisis-affected people, recognizing that food-insecure and vulnerable populations are most at risk of human rights violations. Country office interventions were consistent with humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence – although close cooperation with government ministries, and the challenging political context since the April 2015 crisis could have threatened the application of these principles. The country office also followed the wider principle of humanity in alleviating human suffering, and the do-no-harm approach. Indirectly, the country office used social protection to adhere to the protection policy by providing basic material needs and advocating with in-county stakeholders on behalf of beneficiaries, including young destitute children at risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

Sustainability and connectedness

31. The sustainability of portfolio results was constrained by weak national institutional capacities, exacerbated by high turnover among government staff, the chronically challenging context, and funding shortfalls. The evaluation did not find evidence of sustainable results except, potentially, in P4P, when combined with endogenous school feeding. The hand-over of vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) and logistics to national ministries envisaged in the CS did not materialize. The country office formally communicated with relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, when WFP assistance ceased. However, gaps in communication between counterparts and ultimate beneficiaries in the field meant that beneficiaries experienced sudden cessation of interventions because of funding shortfalls, undermining effective exit strategies.

Conclusions – Overall Assessment

32. WFP's first CS in Burundi added value to its positioning and alignment, making optimal differences in Burundi compared with the project-based approaches prior to 2010. The CS was relevant in reflecting the strategic shift towards long-term development in Burundi. It was realistic and far-sighted in its insistence on maintaining an emergency component. Until April 2015, Burundi relied heavily on a few donors, partly because of the envisaged long-term development trend and improved stability.
33. The political instability of April 2015 is threatening the humanitarian situation of most Burundians; if this issue is not resolved soon, there is an evident risk of reversing the initial gains of economic growth. While desiring a return to stable political dynamics, the country is facing crucial and inter-related contextual challenges in balancing the need for resumption of long-term development processes with preparedness for possible further emergencies.¹⁷ The CS correctly identified the structural development issues that are still relevant, although lasting solutions will require increased synergies among all concerned stakeholders and resolute national political guidance.
34. At a strategic level, stakeholders perceive WFP's country office in Burundi as a leading and influential partner diligently applying its comparative advantages in GFA, VAM, disaster response, logistics and the introduction of innovative approaches such as P4P. Several national policies and strategies were successfully developed with the assistance of WFP. Learning from experience, the country office implemented its support for capacity development as a cross-cutting intervention. Overall, WFP's delivery of food assistance was relevant, effective and timely. The country office was largely effective in meeting beneficiary targets in 2011–2012. In later years, with the exception of those for school feeding, GFA and WFP's response to the 2014 flooding emergency, the country office achieved high beneficiary coverage targets in spite of funding shortfalls. However, there were trade-offs between increasing beneficiary coverage and reducing the quantities and duration of food distributions.
35. Positive factors explaining the portfolio's performance and results included strong logistics, the quality of staff and the organizational structure, respect for humanitarian principles and protection coverage, and flexible adaptation of transfer modalities to situations. Performance was negatively affected by weak integration and synergies with other major stakeholders and partners, with which more proactive dialogue and advocacy were needed, often within wider platforms. For example, FFA activities as components of anti-erosion and asset protection programmes are highly relevant in Burundi, but need to adopt a holistic resilience approach. Funding shortfalls were a major factor negatively affecting programming, performance and results of the country portfolio. Resource constraints for surveys, weak documentation by implementing partners, and insufficient human resources constrained the ability of the country office to conduct outcome data analyses and capacity development.

¹⁷ Challenges include poverty, rapid demographic growth, increasing scarcity of arable land, effects of climate change, food insecurity, poor education quality, and malnutrition, combined with gender inequality.

Recommendations

36. The evaluation makes nine recommendations, ranked in order of importance.

No.	Issue	Recommendation	Rationale	Responsibility and timing
1	Strategic alignment and positioning	In the new Country Strategic Plan (CSP), maintain the two CS priorities – i) food and nutrition security; and ii) emergency preparedness and response – in a two-pronged strategic approach. Include readiness ¹⁸ to respond more effectively to current challenges. Capacity development should be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting theme in the new CSP and operations. Externally, strengthen synergies with national strategic partners – ministries of agriculture, health, education, and solidarity – and United Nations partners, complemented by institutional advocacy for synergies on major food security issues.	The CS is still aligned with population needs and government priorities, and coherent with the UNDAF, donors' objectives and WFP Strategic Objectives; the three priorities are still relevant, but face crucial challenges given the need to balance possible emergency and long-term development needs. In practice, synergies were weak throughout the CS; activities often lacked coordination and harmonization with partners.	Country office, with support from the Nairobi Regional Bureau (RBN) and Headquarters 2016–2017
2	Targeting and integration	Internally, strengthen geographical and programme integration through better-targeted multi-sectoral operational planning. Strengthen coordination with government and non-government implementing partners.	Activities were scattered across the country and lacked consistency in objectives, with some variation in application of the targeting criteria.	Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters 2016–2017
3	Gender	Enhance women's economic empowerment through gender-sensitive income-generating activities and the formation of partnerships with other actors in gender and family planning. Programming should focus on young people – men/boys and women/girls – using the national nutrition platform to support gender empowerment and applying gender markers systematically.	Population pressure on land, lack of sensitization and instability have been resulting in widespread and increasing gender-based violence and gender inequalities. These issues are major contributing factors to food insecurity in Burundi.	Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters 2016–2017

¹⁸ Strategic pre-positioning of supplies and contingency planning for disaster preparedness and response, while addressing long-term development challenges.

No.	Issue	Recommendation	Rationale	Responsibility and timing
4	Social protection, humanitarian and protection principles	<p>In partnership with the Ministry of National Solidarity, expand carefully designed safety nets for social protection programming to respond to population needs arising from the crisis and adhering to humanitarian and protection principles.</p> <p>Explicitly include the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and protection in WFP strategic and programme documents.</p>	<p>Given the growing consequences of crises and the increased needs for safety nets for the most vulnerable people, there is need to locate GFA within the social protection framework</p> <p>Risks remain high although WFP interventions have been consistent with humanitarian principles and protection policy and despite close cooperation with government authorities.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters</p> <p>2016–2017</p>
5	Nutrition	<p>In partnership with the Ministry of Health and UNICEF, enhance the country office's role in nutrition through: i) consistent application of WFP nutrition guidelines; ii) a continuum of care services at health centres and in communities integrating nutrition with access to food; iii) support to the development of a national stunting reduction strategy, while continuing to promote the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement; iv) improving monitoring, evaluation and analysis of nutrition outcome data; and v) advocating for the engagement of young people in prevention of malnutrition.</p>	<p>The reinforced presence of WFP field monitors has mitigated the lack of trained staff in health centres and allowed MAM treatment to follow the national protocol. Combining MAM treatment with nutrition education and gender empowerment could contribute to optimizing results.</p> <p>Consistent and systematic application of stunting prevention guidelines and the SUN window of opportunity for reaching young children could reinforce the country office's efforts to prevent stunting through pilot blanket feeding, which started in 2015.</p>	<p>Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters</p> <p>2016–2017</p>

No.	Issue	Recommendation	Rationale	Responsibility and timing
6	School feeding	Support the development of national school feeding programmes with greater focus on education quality, working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, and through gap analysis and mapping. Internally, strengthen linkages with P4P to deliver a standard package to targeted schools.	School feeding has contributed to increased enrolment, attendance and gender balance in schools. However, it has also led to far larger class sizes, which have affected education quality – a crucial driver of change in Burundi. Greater clarity in the process for selecting schools, and work with United Nations partners to address education quality would boost educational outcomes.	Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters 2016–2017
7	Resilience ¹⁹	In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, FAO and IFAD, support communities by integrating comprehensive and sustainable FFA packages into community development plans.	Within the framework of a comprehensive approach to resilience, WFP can contribute to mitigating climate shocks. In early 2016, the Ministry of Agriculture introduced a new anti-erosion policy. Lessons have been learned from collaboration with IFAD.	Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters 2016–2017
8	Resource mobilization	Update the country office's resource mobilization strategy and advocate for more flexibility in donor funding, allowing multi-year resource commitments.	Funding shortfalls, earmarking and the short programming cycles of donors were major problems for portfolio performance and results	Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters 2016–2017
9	Outcome monitoring and analysis	Enhance the consistency of outcome data monitoring and analysis.	Corporate outcome indicators were not consistently collected over the period; SPRs indicate resource constraints for surveys or lack of recording by implementing partners.	Country office, with support from RBN and Headquarters 2016–2017

¹⁹ In the second half of 2015, the country office started repositioning its resilience response towards more integrated packages for better-quality FFA interventions, to be implemented for several years in the same localities and in synergy with other activities.

Acronyms Used in the Document

CBT	cash-based transfer
CP	country programme
CPE	country portfolio evaluation
CS	country strategy
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DRR	disaster risk reduction
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food assistance for assets
GFA	general food assistance
IDP	internally displaced person
IFAD	International Fund For Agricultural Development
IR	immediate-response
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
P4P	Purchase for Progress
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
RBN	Nairobi Regional Bureau
SPR	Standard Project Report
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TB	tuberculosis
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	vulnerability analysis and mapping
WHO	World Health Organization