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Evaluation reports
For consideration

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Summary evaluation report of Cameroon country portfolio (from 2012 to mid-2017)

Executive summary

The country portfolio evaluation covered WFP's portfolio in Cameroon from 2012 to mid-2017. It assessed WFP's strategic positioning in Cameroon, the quality of and factors influencing WFP's decision making, and the performance and results of portfolio activities. It was timed to inform the programming and operationalization of WFP's new Cameroon country strategic plan, approved in June 2017, and to contribute to enhanced collaboration and synergies among the Rome-based agencies.

Guided by its national strategy for growth and employment for 2010–2020, Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country with a relatively stable average annual economic growth rate of 5.5 percent and a population of 23 million.¹ In 2016, Cameroon was ranked 153rd of 187 countries in the Human Development Index and trends are improving.² Cameroon has experienced instability in the northern and eastern regions³ as a result of the crisis in the Central African Republic and the Boko Haram insurgency spreading into the Lake Chad Basin. This situation led to the activation of a WFP Level 3 emergency response that ran from May to August 2014 as needs significantly exceeded the country office's response capacity.

The evaluation found that WFP was highly valued for its leadership in food assistance and its flexible approach. Stakeholders recognized WFP's comparative advantages in food assistance, emergency nutrition support, logistics and outreach. Decision making was influenced by the situation in the northern and eastern regions; WFP's role in humanitarian and development platforms; and resource availability, which also affected performance, results and handover to national partners. Overall, WFP's assistance was relevant and timely in responding to the life-saving and recovery needs of 2.5 million beneficiaries. The realignment of the portfolio in 2013–2014 to serve more refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable host populations, coupled with the recent shift in approach from treating malnutrition to preventing it and the

¹ World Bank. 2017. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/cameroon?view=chart>.

² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CMR>.

³ Far North, North, Adamaoua and East regions.

In line with the Evaluation Policy (2016–2021) (WFP/EB.2/2015/4-A/Rev.1), to respect the integrity and independence of evaluation findings some language contained in this report may not be standard WFP terminology; please direct any requests for clarification to the WFP Director of Evaluation.

Focal points:

Ms A. Cook
Director of Evaluation
tel.: 06-6513-2030

Mr D. Habtemariam
Evaluation Officer
tel.: 06-6513-3169

introduction of cash-based transfers, was appropriate and effective. The portfolio reorientation, however, left unmet longer-term food security needs in the northern and eastern regions. This was partly a result of the prioritization of life-saving interventions and of funding shortfalls, which led to a reduction in the quantity and duration of food assistance, although more beneficiaries were assisted. WFP's country office has paid increasing attention to emerging issues affecting protection and humanitarian access. On a more positive note, WFP technical assistance contributed to the national food security programme and monitoring and early warning systems, although capacity gaps remain. Effective partnerships with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund enabled improved complementarity and synergies in WFP's use of status registration and in the treatment of severely malnourished children. Collaboration among the Rome-based agencies was limited, consisting of cooperation in strategic planning and food security monitoring.

The evaluation made seven recommendations: to refocus nutrition programming on a prevention approach; to expand the use of cash-based transfer modalities; to deepen collaboration with the Rome-based agencies; to continue to target humanitarian needs in the northern and eastern regions while gradually moving towards the re-establishment of early recovery activities; to develop an evidence-based operational strategy for integrating gender considerations into programming in line with WFP's gender policy and action plan; to design and systematize an effective communication framework; and to develop a strategy for supporting the development of national and local capacities in food security monitoring, early warning and response.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary evaluation report of Cameroon country portfolio (from 2012 to mid-2017) set out in document WFP/EB.1/2018/5-A and the management response set out in document WFP/EB.1/2018/5-A/Add.1 and encourages further action on the recommendations presented in the report, taking into account the 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. The country portfolio evaluation covered WFP's portfolio in Cameroon from 2012 to mid-2017. It assessed WFP's strategic positioning in Cameroon, the quality of and factors influencing WFP's decision making, and the performance and results of portfolio activities. It was timed to inform programming and operationalization of WFP's new Cameroon country strategic plan (CSP), approved in June 2017, and to contribute to enhanced collaboration and synergies among the Rome-based agencies.
2. The evaluation was conducted by WFP's independent Office of Evaluation together with an external team; with field work in Cameroon which took place from 7 to 25 August 2017. The evaluation team relied on extensive existing secondary data complemented by interviews with stakeholders. The country portfolio evaluation built on evidence from two operation evaluations completed in 2016.⁴ In 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development also conducted evaluations of their respective country portfolios in Cameroon. The results of the three evaluations will be presented at a joint workshop in February 2018 to inform future partnerships, coherence and synergy among the Rome-based agencies.

Context

3. With a population of 23 million people, Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country with a relatively stable but recently slowing average annual economic growth rate of 5.5 percent. The country's economy is guided by the Government's strategy for growth and employment (2010–2020). Since 2014, there has been instability in the northern and eastern regions of the country⁵ as a result of the crisis in the Central African Republic and the Boko Haram insurgency spreading into the Lake Chad Basin. Currently, there are more than 325,000 refugees from the Central African Republic and Nigeria and 230,000 internally displaced persons in Cameroon, where 35 percent of the population is food-insecure, chronic and acute malnutrition rates are high and literacy rates are very low in some regions – 40 percent in the Far North Region, for example.⁶ This humanitarian crisis has brought new challenges with regard to protection and humanitarian access.
4. According to the national gender policy for 2011–2020, socio-cultural gender norms are a major hurdle for the achievement of equal rights and opportunities between men and women. In 2015, Cameroon's Gender Inequality Index score was 0.568,⁷ placing it 136th of the 160 countries in the index. The shortage of reliable statistics on women's empowerment and gender equality is a major challenge to ensuring that programmes respond to gender issues.
5. From 2012 to 2016, humanitarian assistance to Cameroon increased from USD 31 million to USD 189 million.⁸ Overall, official development assistance has been low, at 2.5 percent of Cameroon's gross national income, with France, the World Bank, the European Union, Germany and the United States of America accounting for 75 percent of the total.⁹

⁴ Evaluations of protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 200552 and regional emergency operation (EMOP) 200777.

⁵ Far North, North, Adamaoua and East regions.

⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>.

⁷ UNDP. 2016. The Gender Inequality Index. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>. This index is a composite of indicators on the loss of achievement within a country resulting from gender inequality. It uses three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and participation in the labour market.

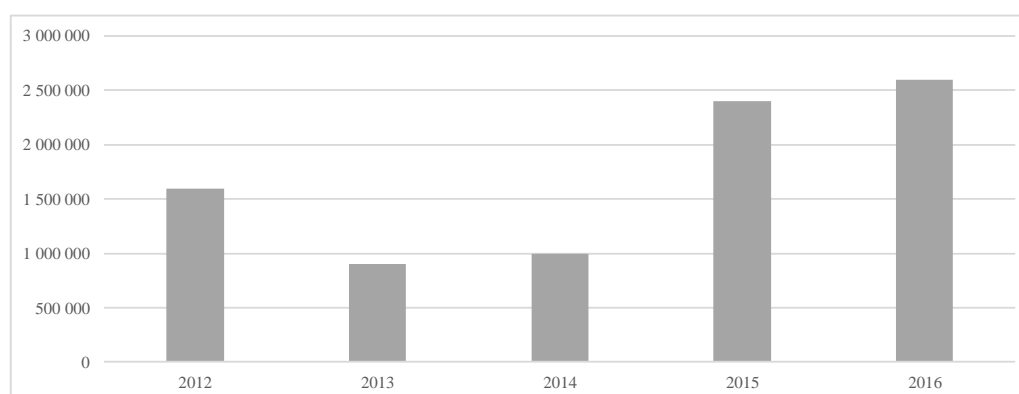
⁸ Financial Tracking Service. 2016. <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/39/summary/2017>.

⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2017. Query Wizard for International Development Statistics. <http://stats.oecd.org/qwids/>.

TABLE 1: CAMEROON SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS			
Source	Year of publication	Indicator	Value
WDI	2012–2016	Population	21–23 million
WDI	2016	Population living below the poverty line	37.5%
WDI	2016	Agriculture value added (% of gross domestic product)	15%
WDI	2014	Arable land (% of land area)	13.1%
EFSA	2016	Food-insecure population	9.6%
WDI	2016	Nutrition deficit (<i>kcal/person/day</i>)	63.0
WDI	2015	Population with access to basic sanitation	38.8%
WDI	2016	Primary school net enrolment	92%
UNHCR	2016	Internally displaced persons	199 000
UNHCR	2016	Refugees	347 000
UNICEF	2012–2015	National stunting rate (% of children under 5)	32.5–31.7%
UNICEF	2015	Global acute malnutrition	5.2%
UNICEF	2015	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	596

EFSA = emergency food security assessment; WDI = world development indicators; UNHCR = Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; UNICEF = United Nations Children’s Fund.

Figure 1: Number of food-insecure people in Cameroon, 2012–2016

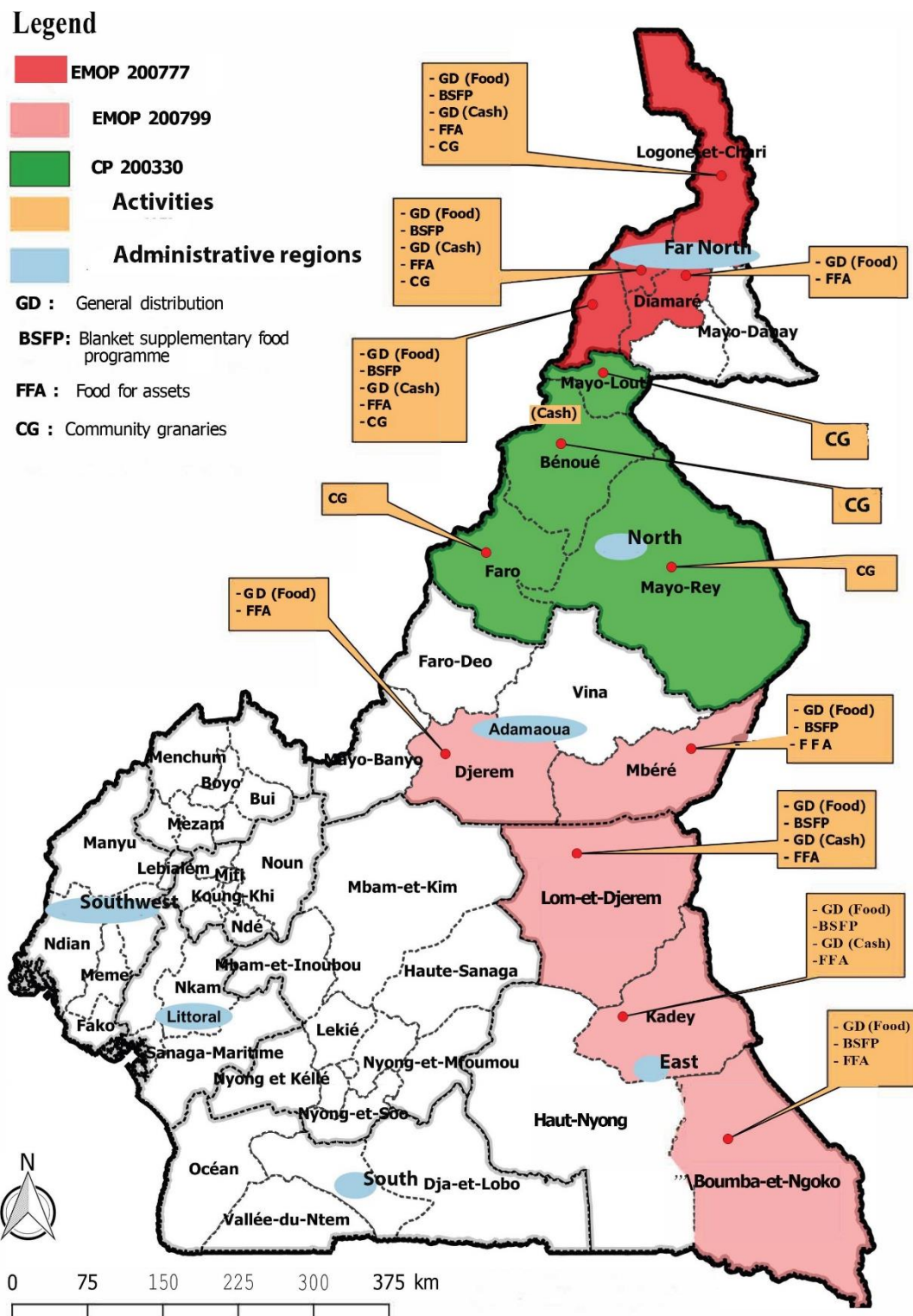


Source: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. www.unocha.org.

WFP’s portfolio

- WFP’s support for Cameroon started in the 1970s. From 2012 to mid-2017, WFP’s portfolio in Cameroon was multi-faceted, with 11 relief, recovery and development-oriented activities and special operations in the Far North, North, East and Adamaoua regions, which have the highest levels of poverty, food insecurity and humanitarian needs. The country programme for 2013–2017 provided an operational framework reflecting an orientation towards development.
- In 2014, because of spillover from conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin, Nigeria and the Central African Republic, WFP responded to massive and rapidly increasing humanitarian needs by moving from relatively long-term development-oriented interventions to emergency responses providing general food assistance and nutrition support. Starting in 2016, more recovery-oriented activities were gradually added.

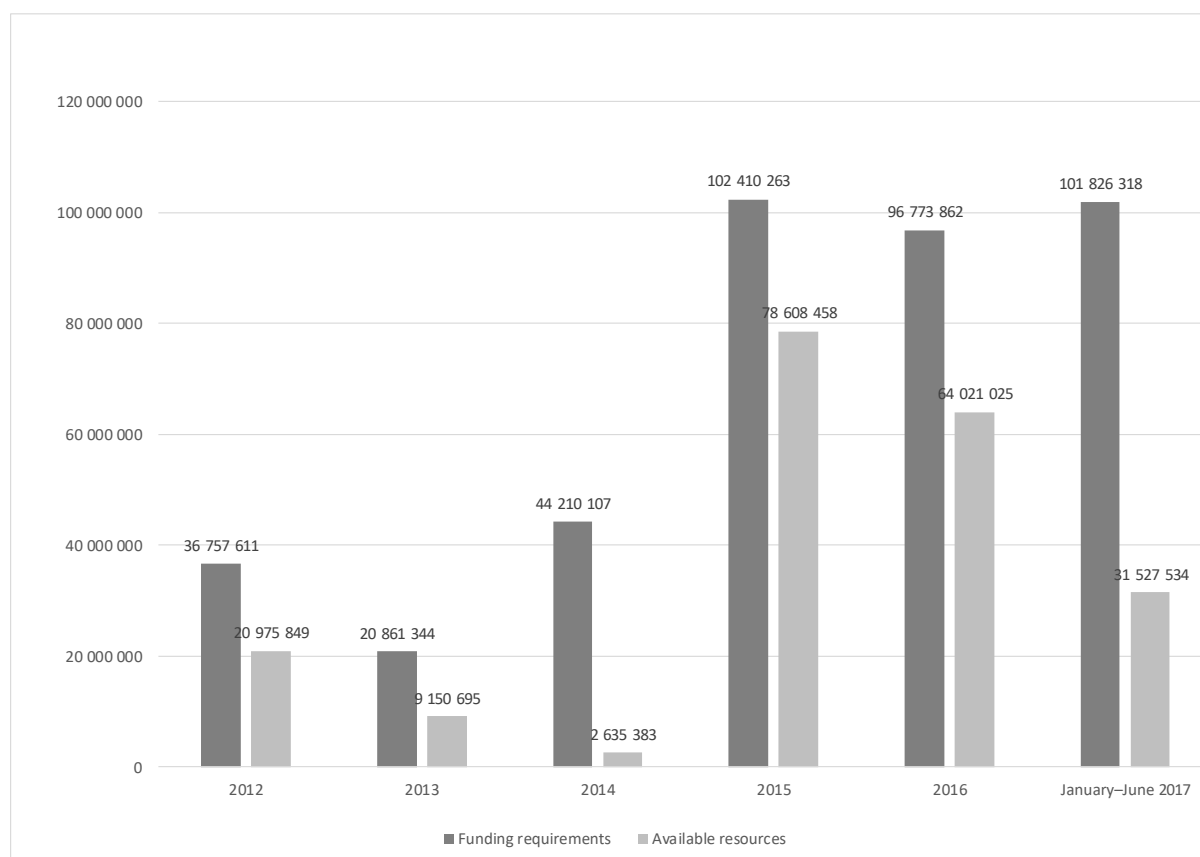
Figure 2: WFP activities in Cameroon (February 2017)



Source: Country office.

8. During the period under review, the portfolio was funded at 57 percent of requirements (Figure 3).
9. There was no country strategy document covering the evaluation period. In June 2017, a new CSP for 2018–2020 was approved by the Executive Board. Compared with the country programme for 2013–2017, the CSP covers a larger target beneficiary group, including refugees and internally displaced persons, while still being centred on the northern and eastern regions. The CSP provides an integrated response that will contribute to the achievement of zero hunger objectives and is based on enhanced collaboration with the Rome-based agencies and other partners. It focuses on the humanitarian–development nexus, in line with WFP’s strategic plan for 2017–2021.

Figure 3: Funding requirements versus available resources, from 2012 to mid-2017 (USD)



Source: WFP Cameroon resource overview 2012–31 July 2017.

Figure 4: WFP portfolio overview, from 2012 to mid-2017

	pre 2012	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	mid 2017
Cameroon relevant events	<p>2008 high food and fuel Prices</p> <p>Major challenges to food security due to floods and rain</p> <p>2011 price of maize 42% higher than in 2010</p>	<p>High food insecurity and malnutrition in northern and eastern regions (15% of households food insecure)</p>	<p>Floods</p> <p>Number of food insecure people increases from 1.1 to 2.7 million</p> <p>Northern regions received 15,000 Nigerian refugees on top of 17,000 in the east</p>	<p>Humanitarian crisis in the northern and eastern regions</p> <p>Over 241,000 refugees arrive from the Central African Republic and 60,000 from Nigeria</p> <p>Troops deployed to the Nigerian border</p> <p>By year end, 40,000 IDPs in northern regions</p>	<p>270,000 refugees from the Central African Republic 71,000 from Nigeria</p> <p>60% of northern farmers face major land access constraints</p> <p>40% of population in the north food insecure - 1/3 households relying on food assistance.</p>	<p>Food security deteriorates</p> <p>2.4 million food insecure in need of assistance; 203,000 severely insecure and 61,000 children under 5 severely or acutely malnourished</p>	<p>2.6 million food insecure in north and eastern regions</p> <p>325,000 refugees and 250,000 IDPs</p> <p>Agricultural conditions improve with weather, but food insecurity constrains agriculture in northern and eastern regions</p>
Overall WFP focus	DEVELOPMENT ORIENTED IN THE NORTHERN REGIONS			RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES IN THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN REGIONS WITH INCREASING INCLUSION OF EARLY RECOVERY INTERVENTIONS			
WFP operations in Cameroon	<p>CP 105300: Country programme</p>	<p>PRRO 200053: Protecting and rebuilding the livelihoods of Central African Republic and Chadian refugees and host populations in Cameroon</p>	<p>EMOP 200396: Food assistance to drought-affected households in the Logone and Chari Division and nutritionally vulnerable groups in the Far North Region</p>	<p>PRRO 200552: Food and nutrition assistance to Nigerian and Central African refugees and host populations in Cameroon</p> <p>EMOP 200689: Emergency assistance to newly arrived refugees</p> <p>IR-EMOP 200679: Food Assistance to Newly Arrived Refugees from the Central African Republic</p>	<p>CP 200330: Country programme</p>	<p>R-EMOP 200799: Critical support to populations affected by the ongoing crisis in Central African Republic and its regional impact</p> <p>R-EMOP 200777: Providing life-saving support to households in Cameroon, Chad, and Niger directly affected by insecurity in northern Nigeria</p> <p>SO 200895: Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Cameroon</p> <p>R-SO 200934: Regional optimization of supply corridors</p>	
Key Policies and Strategies	Government of Cameroon growth and employment strategy document 2010 - 2020			Revised UNDAF 2011-2012; signed by 18 agencies		United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) 2013-2017 signed by 20 agencies	
				Strategic Response Plan 2014-2016		Humanitarian Response Plan 2017-2020	
						WFP CSP 2018-2020 approved by the EB in June 2017	

IDP = internally displaced person; CP = country programme; SO = special operation; R-SO = regional SO; EMOP = emergency operation; R-EMOP = regional EMOP.

Evaluation findings

Alignment and strategic positioning of WFP's portfolio in Cameroon

- With conditions in Cameroon relatively stable in 2012 and 2013, WFP was strategically and appropriately placed to support development-oriented initiatives in the country's northern regions, where WFP has been present for several decades. WFP's portfolio was highly relevant to the population's needs, focusing on school meals, community cereal banks and nutrition. In 2014, the arrival of large numbers of refugees from the Central African Republic led to the activation of a WFP corporate Level 3 emergency response, which lasted from May to August 2014, in recognition that humanitarian needs exceeded the country office's response capacity. The Cameroon Level 3 response was harmonized with the Level 3 response in the Central African Republic in order to enhance coordination and efficiency. WFP's rapid response to the emergency situation was facilitated by the country office's food security monitoring capacity and long-term presence in Cameroon. The country office scaled down, and eventually suspended, development-oriented activities.
- WFP's constructive role in coordination platforms for humanitarian and development activities in Cameroon, particularly the UNDAF and the strategic response plan for 2014-2016, which involve 17 United Nations agencies – contributed greatly to the coherence of the portfolio's design. The response plan reflected multi-sector needs and strategic objectives with regard to data collection, analysis of risks and vulnerabilities and reduction of the duration of post-crisis recovery. The humanitarian response plan for 2017-2020 reflects increased attention to resilience and structural and chronic problems leading to vulnerability and humanitarian needs. WFP has focused increasingly on supporting prevention activities in nutrition interventions, partnering

with UNICEF and in conformity with the national food and nutrition policy for 2015–2025, which builds on strategies defined under the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative. Cameroon does not have a humanitarian cluster system but uses sector working groups.

12. Since 2015, the portfolio has gradually shifted from treatment to prevention activities in its nutrition strategy and has introduced cash-based transfers (CBTs) as a new modality.^{10,11} These innovative approaches have provided a useful entry point for WFP to position the portfolio strategically and to operate efficiently. By linking blanket supplementary feeding to general food assistance, WFP promoted internal synergies between the two activities, but the reorientation of the portfolio towards emergency operations left unmet needs for longer-term responses to persistent food insecurity in resilience activities and school feeding, which are particularly important for women and girls.¹²
13. To address gender inequalities, the design of operations in WFP's portfolio increasingly prioritized the needs of women and girls. In practice, however, there was limited context-specific analysis of gender issues based on needs disaggregated by sex, age group and socio-cultural diversity.
14. The geographic and sectoral targeting appropriately aligned WFP's portfolio with the national vision of development contributing to poverty eradication and with national food security and nutrition strategies. Discontinuation of WFP support to community cereal banks, however, prevented full alignment, as building grain storage capacity was a national priority. Because collaboration by the Rome-based agencies was limited, opportunities for following an integrated approach were missed. The new CSP presents the prospect of the Rome-based agencies working together to achieve better results.
15. WFP's leadership in food security assessments was well recognized by partners in Cameroon, placing WFP in a crucial role in humanitarian and development platforms at the national and regional levels, as evidenced by a widespread use of WFP's high-quality and timely food security information products. In addition, WFP collaborated with FAO on annual crop and food security assessments and with the UNHCR on joint assessment missions. There were attempts to coordinate WFP's emergency food security assessments with standardized monitoring and assessment of relief and transition (SMART) surveys, as they are complementary, but coordination of scheduling was a challenge.¹³ To strengthen relevant national capacities, WFP provided technical assistance for the national food security programme, managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and for the first national food security monitoring system to feed into the Government's future early warning system.
16. The 2017 zero hunger strategic review informed the CSP design process, aligning WFP with an analysis of the overall institutional context, including institutions involved in food security, but it does not explicitly identify strategies for enhancing collaboration, synergies and complementarities among the Rome-based agencies. Partners, including donors, welcomed the shift towards integrated planning with greater focus on the humanitarian–development nexus as a viable response to food insecurity in Cameroon, but there was a misperception among some partners regarding the principles, WFP mandates, roles and implementation of the new CSP.

¹⁰ Standard project reports (SPRs) for operations in the 2012–2016 portfolio.

¹¹ The country office also provided targeted supplementary feeding for malnourished children under 5.

¹² See for example WFP, Government of Cameroon National Food Security Programme. 2016. Evaluation de la sécurité alimentaire dans les régions de l'Est, Adamaoua, Nord et de l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun, 14-28 septembre 2015. <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/evaluation-de-la-scurit-alimentaire-dans-les-r-gions-de-l-est-adamaoua-nord-et-extr>.

¹³ Comparison of annual SMART surveys and emergency food security assessments 2012–2017.

Quality of and factors influencing WFP's strategic decision making

17. Decision making was influenced by the context in the northern and eastern regions, WFP's role in humanitarian and development platforms, and resource availability. The country office's consistent consideration of risk levels based on information from multiple sources facilitated adaptation of the portfolio to needs.¹⁴ Activation of the Level 3 emergency response and the launch of specific emergency responses were informed effectively by risk monitoring. The annual risk register outlined mitigation activities for various potential risks,¹⁵ but these activities were general and their effectiveness could not be ascertained.
18. The country office systematically used food and nutrition security information, multiple-indicator cluster surveys and information from the protection working group to inform the design of portfolio operations¹⁶ and strategic decision making, including in the design of the new CSP.¹⁷
19. The country office adhered to WFP's humanitarian protection policy¹⁸ but was not an active member of the protection working group in Cameroon.¹⁹ A coordinated system for the monitoring of protection among humanitarian actors was needed.^{20,21} Internally, WFP's monitoring system provided critical and relevant information through post-distribution monitoring, the accountability system and its well functioning hotlines. The recently launched corporate digital beneficiary and transfer management platform, SCOPE, was expected to enhance the systematic use in decision making of information on protection.²²

Performance and results of the country portfolio

Effectiveness

20. During the period 2012–2016, the total number of beneficiaries was approximately 2.5 million, or 80 percent of the planned target, ranging from 395,709 in 2013 to 735,910 in 2015. Differences in actual versus planned numbers were explained by funding shortfalls, supply chain challenges and errors in estimated needs. For example, in 2014, the number of refugees from the Central African Republic was overestimated. Later, UNHCR's beneficiary counting methods, which WFP used in its planning for refugees, were modified through the introduction of biometrics.

¹⁴ WFP staff.

¹⁵ Cameroon country office risk register reports from 2012 to mid-2017.

¹⁶ Operation documents for portfolio, from 2012 to mid-2017.

¹⁷ CSP 2018–2020 and interviews with WFP staff.

¹⁸ WFP/EB.1/2012/5-B/Rev.1.

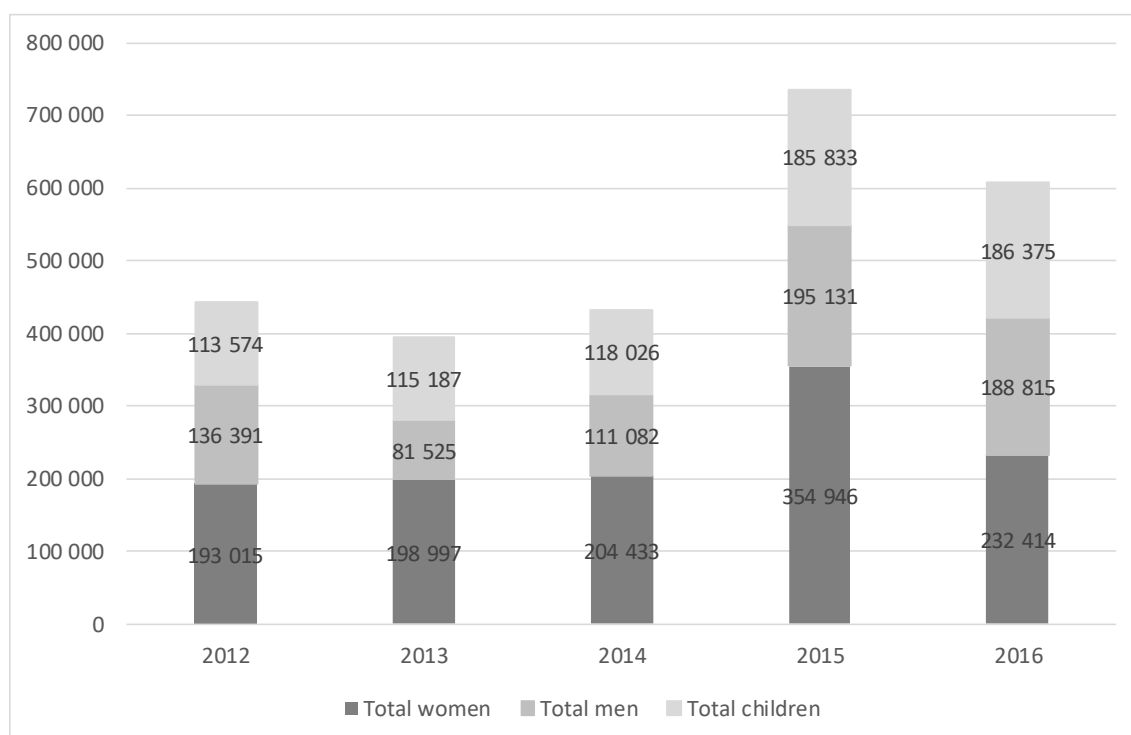
¹⁹ Operation documents.

²⁰ Information from international non-governmental organizations active in protection work in the Far North Region.

²¹ UNHCR. 2016. *Stratégie Nationale du Secteur Protection au Cameroun (2016-2017)*.

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/cameroon/document/strat%C3%A9gie-nationale-du-secteur-protection-au-cameroun-2016-2017>.

²² Interviews with partners.

Figure 5: Actual numbers of beneficiaries, 2012–2016

Sources: SPRs 2012–2016.

21. *General food assistance* reached more beneficiaries than planned, at 104 percent, while targeted supplementary feeding reached 86 percent and food assistance for assets (FFA) 55 percent. Supporting 276 schools, school meals reached only 25 percent of planned beneficiaries because of the suspension of activities in 2015 and resource and capacity shortfalls among counterparts. WFP's standard project reports, however, showed a decrease in drop-out rates from 4 to 2.5 percent of enrolled children. Although limited in scale, food by prescription for HIV/AIDS patients reached a relatively high share of planned beneficiaries at 89 percent.

TABLE 2: ACTUAL AND PLANNED NUMBERS OF BENEFICIARIES BY ACTIVITY, 2012–2016

	School meals	Nutrition	General food assistance	FFA/FFT	Food by prescription
Planned	359 746	2 197 022	1 223 890	726 633	4 300
Actual	91 728	1 879 003	1 268 998	397 648	3 819
Actual as % of planned	25	86	104	55	89

FFA/FFT = food assistance for assets/food assistance for training

Sources: SPRs 2012–2016.

22. *Nutrition.* From 2012 to 2015, recovery rates among children under 5 suffering from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) showed little or no improvement.²³ Some operations underperformed, including country programme 200330, under which recovery rates fell from 75 percent in 2014 to 67 percent in 2015, partly as a result of changes in beneficiary groups, with increasing numbers of malnourished Nigerian refugees and internally displaced persons. With the introduction of a preventive approach in the regional EMOPs in the East and Far North regions, recovery rates exceeded 90 percent in 2016 – an improvement of more than 20 percent compared with 2015 (Table 3).

²³ See also SMART surveys for PRRO 200552, but attribution of results to WFP activities was not possible.

TABLE 3: RESULTS OF NUTRITION SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN UNDER 5 WITH MODERATE ACUTE MALNUTRITION (percentages)		
Operation	Recovery rate, children < 5	
	Base value	Latest measurement
Country programme 200330	74.74 (2014)	67.00 (2015)
PRRO 200053	82.10 (2013)	81.22 (2014)
PRRO 200552	79.00 (2013)	78.05 (2015)
EMOP 200396	64.00 (2012)	77.00 (2013)
EMOP 200689	77.00 (2014)	67.00 (2014)
EMOP 200799	67.00 (2015)	96.00 (2016)
EMOP 200777	66.00 (2015)	90.58 (2016)

Sources: SPRs 2012–2016.

23. The shift in approach to nutrition – from treatment to prevention – also facilitated greater coverage, with larger numbers of children enrolled. It promoted the establishment of nutrition-sensitive preventive delivery platforms through which multiple services could be provided to complement nutrition assistance, including health care, immunization, water and hygiene services and behaviour change communication. In September 2016, a mid-term evaluation in the Far North Region confirmed that this approach enhanced community ownership and monthly screening.²⁴ It also enhanced the coverage of integrated health behaviour change activities through a strong nutrition education component and the use of nutrition products adapted to the preferences of beneficiaries.
24. In 2015, based on feasibility studies that recommended an initial pilot, CBTs were introduced for general food assistance under the two regional EMOPs for 75,000 beneficiaries. Because of protection concerns, vouchers were chosen as the CBT modality. Retailer fairs were introduced in locations where market functioning was inadequate.

TABLE 4: COST EFFECTIVENESS – CBTs UNDER EMOP 200799 VERSUS IN-KIND FOOD UNDER EMOP 200777		
	EMOP 200799	EMOP 200777
Omega value	0.02	0.01

Source: Country office.

25. The Omega value for both operations was less than 1, indicating that the voucher modality was more cost-effective than in-kind food in supporting nutrition outcomes. This finding is in line with the operational decision to adopt CBTs on the basis of certain criteria including market functioning. As the programming capacity of the country office covers only the pilot phase, scaling up of CBTs will require capacity strengthening in this area.
26. In general, the quality, usefulness and durability of assets created through FFA were not well documented in SPRs, except for the community cereal banks constructed under the country programme. The 2013 monitoring reports of the FAO/WFP management committee revealed that

²⁴ WFP and Government of Cameroon. 2016. *Evaluation à mi-parcours de la nouvelle stratégie de réponse nutritionnelle en urgence région de l'extrême-nord*. The evaluation team comprised representatives of the Ministry of Public Health/Subdirection for Food and Nutrition, Extreme North Regional Delegation of Public Health and WFP.

the storage facilities of community cereal banks were in poor condition.²⁵ The role of community committees in maintaining the facilities was not clear.

Efficiency

27. Throughout the evaluation period, WFP's supply chain and the timeliness of food assistance deliveries were negatively affected by several factors. Funding shortfalls and delays led to reductions in rations and temporary suspensions of food distributions, as was the case in 2015 for assistance to refugees in the eastern region.²⁶ WFP's response to funding shortages was to decrease or suspend non-life-saving activities and to reduce the frequency of distributions and the sizes of rations.
28. In November 2015, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) started to operate flights to serve the growing number of humanitarian actors in Maroua who were challenged by inadequate road infrastructure, unreliable air connections provided by private airlines and poor medical services in the Far North Region. UNHAS was timely in facilitating humanitarian responses in the region.
29. With the aim of promoting efficiency, a regional approach was followed for EMOPs in response to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin and the Central African Republic; partners welcomed the approach and considered it effective in addressing a regional crisis at the national level.²⁷ It facilitated the exchange of information and lessons learned and the harmonization of practices while enhancing the visibility and management of WFP's operations with greater support from the regional bureau.²⁸
30. While information flows from WFP were impressive, there was very limited communication appropriately tailored to the needs of different users regarding WFP's CSP and areas of potential intervention.

Monitoring and evaluation

31. Monitoring and evaluation and complaint and feedback mechanisms have recently been strengthened through increased staffing and the country office tool for managing effectively, COMET, but used a generalized approach with aggregated performance indicators such as numbers of women on food distribution committees. The 2016 evaluation of EMOP 200777 found that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms needed to be better adapted to the nature of the emergency caused by the regional crisis.²⁹

Gender issues

32. The prioritization of women and girls as beneficiaries drew attention to the importance of considering gender issues in programming. According to stakeholders in Cameroon, measures to facilitate women's participation in activity implementation by appointing women as monitors and ensuring equal numbers of men and women in distribution committees were positive steps in the promotion of gender equality. Evidence of their effect on gender equality, however, was weak. The standard gender indicators used in SPRs were of limited use in assessing the concrete contributions that operations made in terms of enhancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

²⁵ FAO/WFP management committee. 2013. *Rapport Annuel d'Activites – Exercice 2013*. The FAO/WFP management committee is an interministerial committee established by the Government of Cameroon in 1986 to manage, monitor and coordinate the distribution of in-kind food aid provided by FAO and WFP, including counterpart contributions such as the transport of cereals and support to community cereal stocks for WFP assistance. The Government is currently reorganizing the committee to adapt to the needs of today's food security cooperation.

²⁶ SPRs of portfolio operations 2012–2016.

²⁷ Interviews with stakeholders and WFP.

²⁸ Interviews with current and former staff of the country office and the regional bureau.

²⁹ WFP. 2016. *Opération Régionale d'urgence (Reg. EMOP) Afrique de l'Ouest 200777 – "Fournir un soutien salvateur aux ménages au Cameroun, au Tchad et au Niger directement affectés par l'insécurité dans le nord du Nigeria" Rapport d'Evaluation*. <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/reports/wfp285415.pdf>.

Partnerships

33. The Rome-based agencies coordinated their work in Cameroon strategically within the UNDAF, humanitarian working groups and the SUN initiative. WFP partnerships with UNHCR, UNICEF and national partners showed better complementarity and synergies in WFP's use of status registration, in the treatment of severely malnourished children, and in nutrition prevention platforms.³⁰ Differences in organizational planning, funding and implementation schedules constrained the scope and scale of WFP's synergies with other United Nations agencies. While WFP/FAO cooperation on food security information and assessments was effective, plans for complementary implementation of activities for school gardens, school meals, seed protection and community cereal banks were not realized. Partners indicated that purchase for progress was a potential area for future Rome-based agency collaboration.

Sustainability

34. Despite the provision of direct support for local capacity strengthening, the shift towards emergency response constrained effective handover to national partners. The nutrition activities of PRRO 200552 were transferred to the succeeding EMOP, while FFA and FFT activities were discontinued, with inadequate follow-up affecting the likelihood of FFA results being sustainable.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall assessment

35. Supported by its long-term presence in Cameroon and its recognized leadership in food assistance WFP, through a flexible approach, facilitated the appropriate shift from development-oriented to humanitarian assistance and was well received by partners.
36. WFP's strategic comparative advantages in Cameroon are in food security assessments, general food assistance, logistics, school meals and nutrition. The various response instruments used were appropriate to the evolving needs of the population. The geographic and sectoral targeting in the four northern and eastern regions was highly relevant given the multiple challenges of food insecurity.
37. The portfolio was aligned with national policies and coherent with the UNDAF and the humanitarian response plan. During the planning phase, there was coherence with interventions of other development and humanitarian actors. WFP intended to establish both strategic and operational collaboration with partners, but there was little practical action on joint programming and implementation, which limited the use of opportunities for synergies and partnerships in achieving food security objectives.
38. Effective partnerships with UNHCR and UNICEF allowed better complementarity and synergies in WFP's use of status registration and in the treatment of severely malnourished children. Rome-based agency collaboration was mainly limited to cooperation in strategic planning, coordination and food security monitoring. The various programming cycles and resource capacities of United Nations partners were not conducive to realizing potential complementarities, particularly in respect of school meals and livelihood activities.
39. The reorientation of the portfolio in 2013–2014 to increase the focus on refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable host populations was relevant in view of the arrival of large numbers of refugees from the Central African Republic and Nigeria and the rapidly increasing number of internally displaced persons. It left large unmet needs for the continuation of livelihood activities, however, including school meals and FFA to improve the resilience to shocks in communities and households.

³⁰ Mid-term evaluation of Cameroon UNDAF 2013–2017.

40. Overall, the country portfolio was effective in addressing life-saving humanitarian needs, reflecting WFP's strategic positioning and good cooperation with partners at the central and local levels. On the other hand, the portfolio was less effective in achieving early recovery and resilience-related outcomes. Limited results in school meals and FFA revealed efforts to stretch funding by cutting ration sizes and the frequency of distributions, particularly for non-life-saving interventions.
41. Special operations and logistics management were important elements of WFP's strategic positioning and activities in Cameroon. They reinforced WFP's strategic role in food security monitoring, coordination and harmonization and made positive contributions to the efficiency of the portfolio. At the same time, however, efficiency was affected by external factors, particularly the volatility of insecurity, breaks in food assistance pipelines and unpredictability arising from the regional crisis in neighbouring countries. While WFP was efficient in sharing information, communications were inadequate in enhancing understanding of WFP's strategy, areas of potential intervention and approaches.
42. The innovative approaches introduced, such as the use of CBTs and the shift in nutrition activities from treatment to prevention, showed initial positive results and were appropriate for scale-up. CBTs also improved efficiency as did the use of mobile vulnerability analysis and mapping for data collection in areas with restricted humanitarian access.
43. With the shift in focus to respond to emergency needs, protection and humanitarian access issues became even more important. The country office systematized the use of post-distribution monitoring, complaint systems and outreach campaigns on beneficiaries' rights and risks. More needs to be done, however, to tailor communication messages to various users.
44. With regard to longer-term food security interventions launched in the early phase of the portfolio, the sustainability of community structures built through FFA activities was constrained. Adherence to handover strategies developed as part of operations was inadequate.
45. For operation design and implementation, WFP established strong links with national non-governmental organizations as implementing partners and cooperation with central and regional government institutions. There was, however, no systematic strategy to guide WFP's contribution to national capacity strengthening in respect of food security.
46. There has been a general and increasing recognition of gender issues throughout the portfolio, with rising awareness that women and girls face challenges that are greater than and different from those facing men and boys. Operations targeted women and girls carefully, increasing the potential for improved understanding of gender based needs. There was inadequate gender analysis in programming, however, which did not take into consideration local differences and the dynamic aspects of gender roles. Monitoring indicators for gender-sensitive approaches did not sufficiently cover the promotion of gender transformative roles at the local level.

Recommendations

47. Table 5 presents recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the country portfolio evaluation, with a forward-looking perspective towards the CSP for 2018–2020.

TABLE 5: RECOMMENDATIONS			
No.	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
Strategic orientation			
1	The innovative approaches introduced in the portfolio have demonstrated their appropriateness and shown initial positive results when applied under the right conditions. Scale-up of these innovations, however, will require additional programming capacity in the country office.	<p>1. WFP should consolidate the shift in focus of <i>nutrition activities towards an integrated prevention approach</i> while maintaining the flexibility to allow scale-up of treatment when nutrition monitoring indicates increasing moderate and severe acute malnutrition. This will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) development of a partnership strategy for ensuring integration, synergies and complementarity with other partners, especially the Rome-based agencies; b) promotion of healthy diets through locally appropriate outreach campaigns, including cooking classes and complementarity with school meals programming; c) enhancement of investments in food security monitoring systems that allow continuous monitoring of nutrition status and systematic monitoring of nutrition outcomes; d) focus on the “1,000 day window” between conception and 2 years of age in order to further increase efficiency and effectiveness in line with the SUN initiative recommendations; and e) continuous nutrition monitoring in targeted areas of children under 5, pregnant and lactating women and girls and other vulnerable groups, including adolescent girls and elderly people. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020
2	The innovative approaches introduced in the portfolio have demonstrated their appropriateness and show initial positive results when applied in the right conditions. Scale-up of these innovations, however, will require additional programming capacity in the country office.	<p>2. WFP should expand the programming capacity of the country office in the use and scale-up of CBT modalities, guided by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) systematic post-distribution analysis of cost efficiency and cost effectiveness; b) monitoring and analysis of factors affecting the choice of transfer modality, such as market functioning, and beneficiary preferences and satisfaction; and c) analysis of options for combining transfer modalities. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020

TABLE 5: RECOMMENDATIONS			
No.	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
3	The innovative approaches introduced in the portfolio have demonstrated their appropriateness and show initial positive results when applied under the right conditions. Scale-up of these innovations, however, will require additional programming capacity in the country office.	<p>3. WFP should consider the limited complementarity of the Rome-based agencies and the corporate call for strengthening their collaboration as a means of responding to the Zero Hunger Challenge. The country office should take the initiative in institutionalizing partnerships for joint programming where benefits in terms of synergies and complementarity can be identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Enhance the food security information system through further development of the sentinel system being piloted in the Far North Region. b) Support capacity strengthening for relevant government counterparts. c) Design a resilience strategy that harmonizes complementary activities and resources. d) Explore strategies for combining school feeding with purchase for progress activities. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020
Targeting			
4	In the light of the concentration of persistent food insecurity in the northern and eastern regions, the country office should continue to focus its interventions on these regions, with greater use of longer-term programming and implementation to gradually promote greater resilience following a community-led approach.	<p>4. WFP should continue to focus on the northern and eastern regions while gradually moving towards the re-establishment of early recovery activities. Thus WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensure full integration and synergies between mutually reinforcing interventions so that modifications in one intervention will not have negative impacts on others. b) Establish and implement effective handover and sustainability strategies as an integral part of programming. c) Ensure that programming is based on realistic assessments of funding through broader dialogue with donors during the programming of activities d) Promote and strengthen economic resilience in intervention areas, including through greater use of FFA in, for example, the creation of community food banks, reforestation and the repair of feeder roads. e) Re-establish school meals interventions, including emergency school meals that are coherent with multi-sector support for national social protection systems. f) Enhance strategic cooperation with the newly reorganized national FAO/WFP management committee. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020

TABLE 5: RECOMMENDATIONS			
No.	Rationale	Recommendation	Responsibility and timing
Gender			
5	Given WFP's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, the degree of gender inequality in Cameroon demands systematic and adequate attention to gender considerations in the country office's programming.	5. WFP should develop an evidence-based operational strategy for integrating gender considerations into programming, in line with WFP's gender policy and action plan, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ensuring that programming is based on specific gender analysis and monitoring of key gender-related outcome indicators; and b) strengthening the partnership with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family at the national and regional levels. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020
Communication			
6	Considering the crucial role of enhanced communication in contributing to the visibility, resource mobilization and success of WFP in Cameroon, there is a need to systematize the communication framework to allow the tailoring of communication flows to different users.	6. WFP should design an effective communication framework that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) identification and use of windows of opportunity, platforms for outreach and influencers at all levels; b) development of strategic communication partnerships and alliances; c) mainstreaming of communication protocols throughout the portfolio; d) monitoring of the efficiency of communications; and e) capacity building for country office staff in respect of communication skills. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020
National capacity			
7	To optimize WFP's strategic role in food security information and early warning for evidence-based food security programming, there is a need for a systematic and effective strategy that supports the development of relevant national capacities.	7. WFP should develop a strategy for supporting the development of national and local capacities in food security monitoring, early warning and response. This strategy should seek to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) strengthen collaboration with Cameroon's national institute of statistics. b) continue to support the countrywide sentinel food security monitoring system. c) expand the use of SCOPE by cooperating partners and national counterparts. d) embed capacity development assessments as an integral part of programming. e) develop a strategic framework for supporting relevant local and national partners, based on systematic capacity needs assessments, working in partnership with other actors and aligned with partners' needs. 	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters: 2018–2020

Acronyms used in the document

CBT	cash-based transfer
CSP	country strategic plan
EMOP	emergency operation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food assistance for assets
FFT	food assistance for training
IDP	internally displaced person
PRRO	protracted relief and recovery operation
SPR	standard project report
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UNDAF	United Nations development assistance framework
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WDI	world development indicator