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Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Cameroon (2018–2020)

Executive summary

The evaluation of the Cameroon country strategic plan assessed WFP's strategic relevance and contributions to the strategic outcomes of the country strategic plan, as well as the sustainability, efficiency and coverage of WFP's interventions over the period from 2017 to mid-2019. It provides a basis for accountability to stakeholders with regard to WFP's performance as well as lessons that can inform the development of the next country strategic plan.

Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country but ranks low on the Human Development Index and is marked by growing income inequality. The country has experienced instability as a result of Boko Haram in the Far-North region, an influx of refugees from the Central African Republic into the East and Adamaoua regions and a crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. In 2019, 749,430 people were severely food-insecure, while 227,000 children under 5 suffered from global acute malnutrition.¹

The evaluation found that the introduction of a country strategic plan strengthened the strategic direction and positioning of WFP in Cameroon with regard to crisis response, nutrition, resilience building, partnerships and support for the humanitarian community. The country strategic plan was built on priorities that emerged from assessed needs and the national zero hunger strategic review, and it was broadly aligned with national policies. It was coherent

¹ Cadre harmonisé, 2017 and 2018 Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) surveys.

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 the editing of this report has been limited and as a result some of the language in it may not be fully consistent with the World Food Programme's standard terminology or editorial practices. Please direct any requests for clarification to the Director of Evaluation.

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with the United Nations development assistance framework for Cameroon and helped strengthen WFP collaboration in particular with the Rome-based agencies.

Amid the three crises facing Cameroon WFP adapted to the evolving situation and supported over 1.6 million people, meeting acute food needs in regions highly affected by conflict and food insecurity. The country office pursued a principled approach in a politically sensitive operating environment and prioritized risk management. Coverage and geographic targeting were generally appropriate, although access challenges sometimes made it difficult to apply targeting criteria in a consistent manner.

Despite good results from school feeding in terms of increased enrolment and retention, the activity was scaled down due to funding shortfalls. Asset building and agricultural development activities were small in scale but received increasing attention. National ownership of resilience building activities for refugees was limited. WFP's blanket supplementary feeding programme brought nutrition services closer to the most vulnerable but did not significantly strengthen local capacities.

While progress was made in setting up complaint and feedback mechanisms, in terms of protection and accountability to affected populations there were concerns related to the selection of food assistance modalities, calling for broader engagement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. WFP developed operational strategies for addressing the humanitarian–development nexus but did not mainstream conflict sensitivity or peace work. There was increased integration of gender considerations into programming, contributing to improved gender-sensitive targeting and data collection, but with limited progress on gender transformative outcomes.

Programme efficiency was marked by slow delivery, high transaction costs and recurrent pipeline breaks, mainly due to human and financial resource constraints and severe contextual challenges. The WFP Global Commodity Management Facility and the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service played a critical role in mitigating lead-time management risks. Nevertheless, the increased flexibility in resource allocation expected from the shift to the country strategic plan approach did not materialize.

Overall, WFP only partially met the ambitious expectations for the shift away from project-based programming to country-level strategic programming. It was not fully prepared for the three crises afflicting the country, which diverted WFP resources away from addressing the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. The sustainability of results is doubtful in the light of limited long-term partnerships, funding uncertainties and limited national ownership and capacities.

The evaluation makes six recommendations: strengthen strategic approaches to nutrition, resilience and national capacities; enhance strategic partnerships, funding and advocacy; invest in an evidence base to support the strategic focus and the country strategic plan implementation strategy; strengthen human resources capacity to implement ongoing priorities and prepare for the next country strategic plan; improve emergency preparedness and supply chain and programme implementation effectiveness and efficiency; and strengthen monitoring and evaluation, knowledge-sharing and the communication of results.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Cameroon (2018–2020) (WFP/EB.2/2020/6-A) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2020/6-A/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations set out 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 evaluation of the Cameroon country strategic plan (CSP) assessed WFP's strategic positioning and role; the extent and quality of WFP's specific contributions to CSP strategic outcomes; WFP's efficiency; the factors that explain WFP's performance and the extent to which WFP made the strategic shift expected, over the period 2017 to mid-2019.² It provides evidence from which conclusions regarding WFP's performance and lessons to inform the development of the next CSP may be drawn. It also facilitates accountability to WFP stakeholders. Commissioned by WFP's independent Office of Evaluation, the evaluation was conducted by an external team, with field work in Cameroon from 29 August to 13 September 2019. The evaluation follows a 2017 country portfolio evaluation that provided recommendations that informed CSP operationalization.
2. The evaluation relied on the review of secondary data, complemented by 147 key informant interviews, 13 focus group discussions with beneficiaries and direct observation during site visits to communities and refugee camps. It applied a gender-sensitive methodology covering CSP activities from 2018 onward and related operations in 2017. The evaluation team encountered some local access restrictions, but they did not affect the validity of the findings because the team was able to triangulate information sources.

Context

3. With a population of 25 million, Cameroon is a lower-middle-income country with a low rank on the Human Development Index (150th of 189 countries in 2019)³ and growing income inequality (table 1).⁴ Economic development policy is guided by the Government's Vision 2035 and growth and employment strategy for the period 2010–2020. Cameroon has experienced instability as a result of Boko Haram activity in the Far-North region since 2014; conflict in the North-West and South-West regions between state forces and Anglophone groups seeking greater autonomy since 2017; and the influx of 250,000 refugees from the Central African Republic in the East and Adamaoua regions since 2013. In 2019, Cameroon participated in a voluntary national review that showed modest progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

² The evaluation reviewed activities from 2017 that continued into 2018.

³ United Nations Development Programme country classification.
http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/CMR.pdf.

⁴ The Gini index went from 0.39 in 2007 to 0.44 in 2014.

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	2017	2019
1	Total population ^a	24 566 045	25 216 237 (2018)
2	GDP per capita (USD PPP) ^a	3 645	3 785 (2018)
3	Percentage of urban population ^b	54.4 (2016)	55.8 (2018)
4	Human Development Index score ^b	0.556 (151 out of 189)	0.563 (150 out of 189)
5	Population living below the poverty line of PPP USD 1.90 a day (percentage) ^b	24 (2016)	23.8
6	Population in severe multidimensional poverty (percentage) ^b	25.8 (2016)	25.6
7	Life expectancy at birth ^b	58.6 years (2016)	58.9 years
8	Percentage of children under 5 with stunting ^b	31.7 (2010–2015) ^c	31.7 (2010–2016) ^c
9	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100 000 live births) ^b	596 (2016)	596
10	Prevalence of HIV, total (percentage of population age 15-49 years)	3.7	3.6 (2018)
11	Gender Inequality Index ^b	0.569 (141 out of 160)	0.566 (140 out of 160)
12	Population with at least secondary education (percentage of population aged 25 years or older) ^b	Female: 32.5 Male: 39.2 (2016)	Female: 32.7 Male: 40.9
13	Labour force participation rate, total (percentage of total population aged 15+ years) ^b	Female: 71.2 Male: 81.2 (2016)	Female: 71.2 Male: 81.4

Abbreviations: GDP = gross domestic product; PPP = purchasing power parity.

^a World Bank. World Development Indicators.

^b United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Reports for 2016, 2018 and 2019. Data extracted on 18 May 2020.

^c Data refer to the most recent year.

4. According to the national gender policy for 2011–2020, sociocultural gender norms are a major hurdle for the achievement of equal rights and opportunities. From 2017 to 2019, Cameroon's Gender Inequality Index score declined from 0.569 to 0.566 (from 140th to 141 out of 160 countries).⁵
5. The main donors of official development assistance include the European Union, France, Germany, the International Monetary Fund, the United States of America and the World Bank.⁶ For humanitarian assistance, the main donors are the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Commission (ECHO), Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund and the United States.⁷

⁵ United Nations Development Programme. 2017–2019. Gender Inequality Index. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data#>.

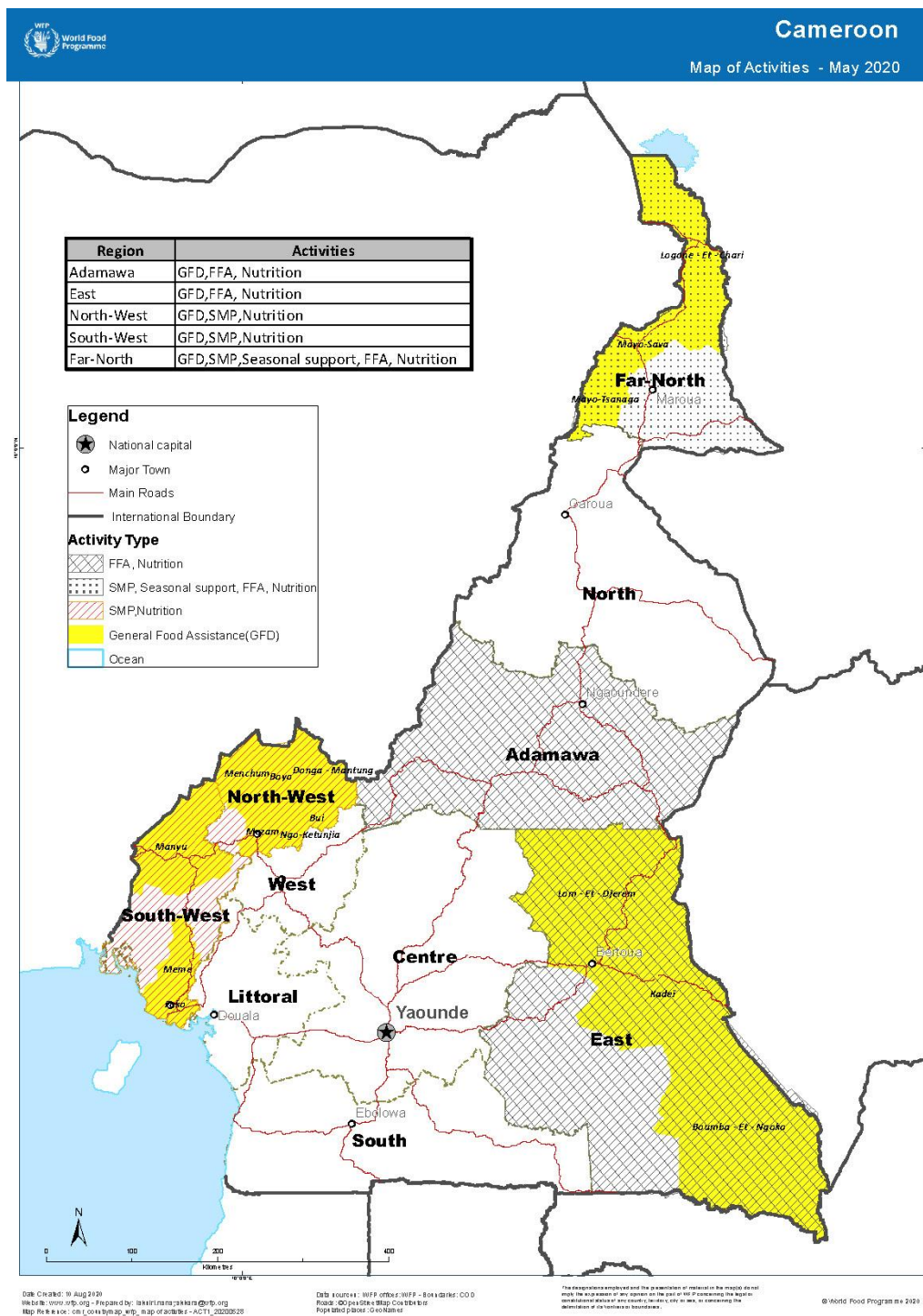
⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee. <https://www.oecd.org/countries/cameroon/>

⁷ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2019. Cameroon country study. <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/cameroon-country-study-humanitarian-financing-task-team-output-iv>.

WFP in Cameroon

6. WFP’s support for Cameroon started in the 1970s. During the review period, Cameroon experienced multiple crises, both internal and spilling over from neighbouring countries. In January 2019 the United Nations humanitarian response plan for the country estimated that there were 665,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 385,000 refugees, mainly from the Central African Republic and Nigeria, and 92,000 returnees. Figure 1 shows WFP activities in Cameroon in 2020.

Figure 1: WFP in Cameroon in 2020

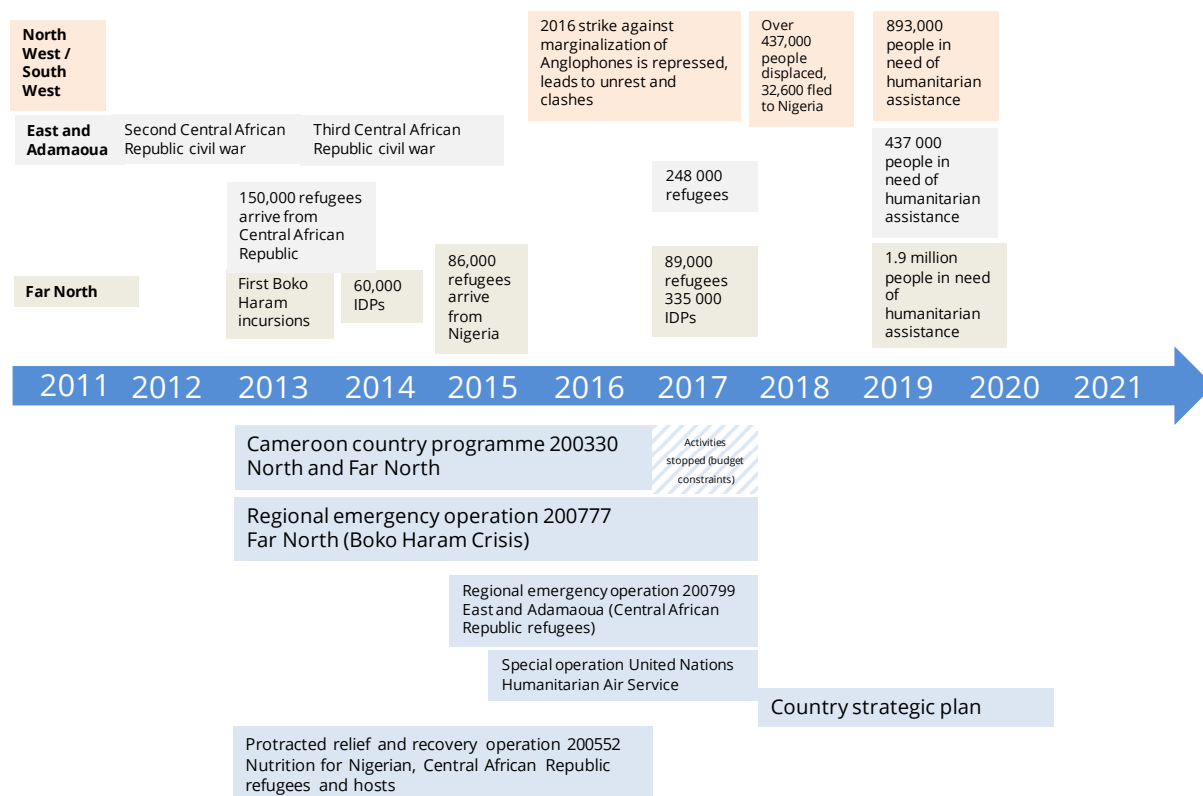


Source: WFP Geospatial Support Unit, May 2020.

Abbreviations: GFD = general food distribution; FFA = food for assets

7. From 2017 to mid-2019 WFP's portfolio in Cameroon comprised one country programme, two regional emergency operations (200777 and 200799), one special operation linked to the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) (figure 2) and relief, recovery and development-oriented activities under the CSP. Supporting refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities through food and cash-based transfers (CBTs), WFP assistance was concentrated in the North and East regions and the new NW/SW crisis area, which had the highest levels of poverty, food insecurity and humanitarian needs.

Figure 2: WFP portfolio overview (2017–2019)^a



Source: OCHA, Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2019, January 2019. IDPs = internally displaced persons

^a Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2019. Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroun-aper-u-des-besoins-humanitaires-2019-janvier-2019>.

8. The Cameroon CSP for 2018–2020 combines activities into a single document based on a new WFP strategic framework and the national zero hunger strategic review consultative process. This shift in approach puts more emphasis on community-led planning; national capacity strengthening in respect of safety nets; nutrition; gender equality; food security monitoring; and partnerships, especially with the Rome-based agencies. The three-year CSP is aimed at six strategic outcomes (table 2).

TABLE 2: STRATEGIC OUTCOMES OF THE CAMEROON COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN (2018–2020)

Strategic outcome 1: Populations affected by disasters, including refugees, internally displaced persons and host populations in Far North, North, Adamaoua and East regions, have safe access to adequate and nutritious food during and after crises.

Strategic outcome 2: Vulnerable households in protracted displacement and communities at risk in chronically food-insecure areas have safe year-round access to adequate and nutritious food, and increase their resilience to shocks.

Strategic outcome 3: Children aged 6–59 months and vulnerable women and men in food-insecure prioritized districts have reduced malnutrition rates in line with national standards by 2020.

Strategic outcome 4: Food-insecure smallholders, especially women, in priority districts of the Far North, North, Adamaoua and East regions, have sustainably increased incomes to enhance their self-reliance and livelihoods and improve their productivity by 2020.

Strategic outcome 5: The Government's work to achieve zero hunger is supported by effective partnerships by 2030.

Strategic outcome 6: The humanitarian community in Cameroon has access to UNHAS until satisfactory alternatives are available.

Findings

To what extent are WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities and people's needs, as well as WFP's strengths?

Relevance to national policies, plans and strategies and strategic positioning

9. In 2016, the national zero hunger strategic review was an important tool for aligning the CSP with national sustainable development goals and relevant national policies and priorities, except in some cases such as prioritizing refugee resilience building. National stakeholders appreciated WFP's partnership, in particular with regard to its advocacy of development-oriented policy options, but saw a need for additional resources to address national food security and nutrition capacity and to pay greater attention to food safety, which is a national priority.
10. In an evolving and diverse context, WFP's analytical work identified and addressed a variety of food and nutrition security needs. The country office pursued a principled positioning of WFP in response to urgent needs in areas affected by conflict and displacement. It harnessed WFP's comparative advantages, highly acknowledged by stakeholders, namely, its logistical capacity and its broad operational network of suboffices that are well located to address refugees' and IDPs' needs.
11. WFP adapted well to the worsening situation in the North-West and South-West regions. WFP food assistance was appropriate to the population's needs, focusing on general food assistance, school feeding, nutrition through a blanket supplementary feeding programme, food for assets and related innovative approaches. However, its understanding of root causes and capacity needs was insufficient, and synergies across the CSP's six ambitious strategic outcomes and activities were limited. The 2017 country portfolio evaluation recommendations informed the design of the CSP, but the recommended internal and external synergies and stronger capacity strengthening efforts did not receive sufficient attention during CSP implementation. Within the relatively short implementation period, the design of the CSP underestimated risks associated with the low level of ownership and capacity of national and local institutions.

Alignment and coherence with the United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF).

12. The CSP was well aligned with the UNDAF for Cameroon, leading to a timely and high degree of coherence between WFP and other United Nations agencies. This alignment stimulated operational sector coordination, such as the conduct of joint missions at the decentralized level and facilitated resource mobilization for resilience programming in the Far North and East regions. Still, within its mandate, WFP could have played a more prominent role with regard to the UNDAF and the United Nations country team. There was coordination between WFP and the other Rome-based agencies but it was not formalized. Collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on nutrition and targeting, respectively, was challenging. In contrast to the crucial role cooperating partners played in field implementation of the CSP, partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were driven by short-term objectives, and WFP's consideration of strategic engagement and leveraging of expertise with those partners was insufficient. There is potential for wider strategic partnerships with NGOs, international financial institutions and the private sector.

What is the extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes in Cameroon?

13. There was progress towards the six strategic outcomes of the CSP and with regard to cross-cutting issues. Overall, the country office performed well on output delivery. The CSP's strategic outcomes were ambitious given its three-year timeframe, and the CSP itself did not allow for the demonstration of actual medium- or long-term changes in the food security of beneficiaries.

General food assistance

14. In 2018 and 2019 WFP supported 1.6 million people, meeting acute food needs and reaching 89 percent of planned beneficiaries through food distributions and 77 percent through CBTs. At the outcome level, household coping strategy index scores increased, but improvements in diversity scores were mixed (table 3).

Region	Modality	Gender	Coping strategy index score			Dietary diversity score		
			Base value	Latest follow-up (2018)	Year-end target (2018)	Base value	Latest follow-up (2018)	Year-end target (2018)
East	CBTs	Male	3.47	6.50	≤3	5.78	5.43	≥5
		Female	2.82	5.23	≤3	5.72	5.78	≥5
	Food	Male	6.91	8.36	≤3	5.57	4.85	≥5
		Female	8.10	7.51	≤3	5.47	5.23	≥5
Far-North	CBTs	Male	10.80	20.69	≤12	5.67	3.88	≥5
		Female	12.77	30.11	≤12	5.02	4.01	≥5
	Food	Male	19.78	26.70	≤10	3.82	3.92	≥5
		Female	20.50	35.01	≤10	3.79	3.93	≥5

Source: WFP. 2019. Cameroon annual country report 2018. <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000104204/download/>.

School feeding

15. With increased ownership by the Ministry of Education of the joint strategy developed in 2017, WFP performed well, assisting 140 schools and distributing meals to 99,936 pupils (125 percent of the planned number). In 2018 meals were provided to 76,000 pupils in 134 primary schools (over 90 percent of the planned number), with a female/male ratio of 0.93 (reaching the >0.7 target). Canteen management committees were established and trained, with the active participation of ministry officials, local authorities and WFP staff. There was an increase in enrolment and retention in WFP-assisted primary schools: enrolment increased from 94.2 to 97 percent, with minor differences between boys and girls, while retention increased from less than 50 percent globally to 74 percent for girls and 68 percent for boys, indicating a clear improvement in outcomes. In the Far-North region, 124 schools closed for security reasons and beneficiaries moved to more secure target areas. WFP support for school feeding activities was set to end in early 2020 because of limited funding.

Food assistance for assets (FFA)

16. Food assistance for assets showed improvement in terms of supporting more beneficiaries. In 2017, FFA activities supported 5,763 participants, 52 percent of which were women in the North and East regions. In 2018, with the introduction of the CSP, FFA reached 12,900 participants through 22 field-level agreements, contributing to early recovery and social cohesion with a gradual shift to a more “resilience-based” approach. Immediate results of FFA indicated a good diversity of crops, with participants shifting from mono-cash crops like tobacco to more diversified community-based farming.

Nutrition response

17. WFP brought blanket supplementary feeding activities closer to the most vulnerable populations through a community-based approach but did not significantly strengthen decentralized capacity. In the Far-North region a shift to CBTs and the introduction of FFA related to animal-food products and non-timber forest products allowed beneficiaries to obtain more diversified and nutritious food. Most WFP staff and management have a good understanding of the nutrition-sensitive approach, and awareness has been raised among partners. Yet, there was room to improve the visibility of nutrition-sensitive activities within the CSP, as well as the adaptation of activities to the local context and attention to the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition.

National capacity strengthening

18. WFP provided uneven support for policy frameworks and partnership platforms prioritized in the CSP. Various training activities in food security and nutrition for government stakeholders were either insufficiently linked to implementation practices or had outcomes that were not well monitored. WFP played a key role in advancing coordinated national food security analysis systems covering regions in which WFP operates. Yet prospects for scaling up and sustainability were limited. Initially, the food security working group made slow progress due to limited government leadership and the limited effectiveness of the advisory roles played by WFP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In 2019, joint Government-WFP-FAO missions were timely for reactivating this working group at a decentralized level. WFP co-led the food security cluster facilitating the response to the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. WFP coordination of cash programming was highly appreciated by stakeholders at the national and decentralized levels.

UNHAS

19. UNHAS provided reliable and relevant passenger transport service in Cameroon and in Chad. In 2018, as planned, a total of 8,454 passengers and 22 metric tons of light cargo were transported on behalf of 50 organizations registered in Cameroon. User satisfaction was high. UNHAS proved critical to the success of humanitarian operations, including through the provision of medical and security evacuation services.⁸

Protection and accountability to affected populations

20. The country office made important progress in the set-up of complaint and feedback mechanisms. Beneficiary protection concerns with regard to refugee camps were systematically reported to UNHCR. However, the country office needs to pay more attention to concerns with the selection of transfer modalities, through continuous engagement with all relevant stakeholders, to make WFP assistance safer and more dignified. Most beneficiaries expressed preference for the in-kind or e-voucher modalities, which allow them both to choose their food and to reduce the risks of violence associated with cash.

Humanitarian principles and access

21. WFP's approach to access has been cautious in the area affected by the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions, where it was sometimes challenging to maintain operational independence from the Government and to be perceived as neutral. WFP did not negotiate directly with non-State armed groups, relying on cooperating partners for targeting, distribution of food assistance and integration of gender and protection issues, which limited full and direct access to the most vulnerable people in need of food assistance in target areas where non-State armed forces were active. The network of WFP suboffices facilitated access to the North and Far-North regions. Some communities in Nigeria were supported from Cameroon, with good cooperation between WFP offices. There was good community acceptance of WFP, which facilitated humanitarian access. Access issues due to insecurity and conflicts by non-State armed forces, together with security guidance and regulations, made it difficult for WFP staff to visit distribution sites and ensure that distributions reached the most vulnerable. This affected WFP's effective optimal adaptation and its ability to conduct deeper analysis of conflict to inform programming and ensure consistent application of targeting criteria and strategies.

Triple nexus

22. The country office developed operational strategies to address the development-humanitarian nexus but did not mainstream conflict sensitivity or peace work. It contributed to the triple nexus in Cameroon via the humanitarian-development nexus and the resilience agenda.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

23. Since 2017, improving the gender sensitivity of activities has been a resourced priority, focusing on the collection of gender-sensitive data and training of WFP staff and partners on gender equality and women's empowerment to prevent WFP activities from having a negative impact on women. Operationalization of gender mainstreaming criteria in targeting remained challenging. There were scattered efforts to better understand the context with regard to gender issues and the implications for WFP evidence-based programming. Overall, progress towards WFP's gender transformative objectives was slow.

⁸ ECHO Aviation evaluation report on UNHAS operation (2018), passengers' satisfaction survey 2018 (88 percent satisfaction) and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. Evaluation of Humanitarian Logistics within EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Action, 2013-2017 (a PDF document only).

Sustainability

24. The underlying vision of the CSP is that sustainability lies in national capacity development and long-term partnerships to improve food and nutrition security through community-based interventions. However, the sustainability of results remains uncertain because long-term partnerships, reliable funding and national ownership and capacity are limited.

To what extent did WFP use its resources efficiently in contributing to CSP outputs and strategic outcomes?

Coverage and geographic targeting

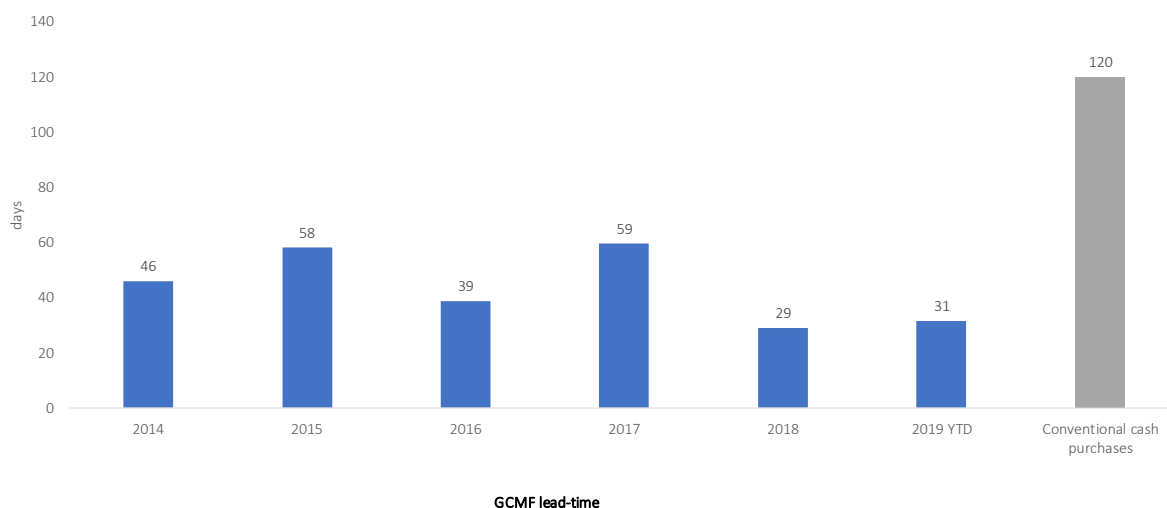
25. Coverage and geographic targeting adapted well to the evolving situation in Cameroon. WFP coverage of needs in the North-West and South-West regions in 2019 was low due to mixed fundraising success in this politically sensitive environment, as well as because of limited WFP preparedness to deliver at scale in an insecure context and limited previous experience with operational cooperating partners. However, in 2018 the limited guidance on targeting exposed WFP to credibility risks vis-à-vis external stakeholders. Application of targeting criteria was inconsistent and several data errors regarding CBT beneficiaries were made. Other factors affecting targeting, including security, physical access, presence of partners and potential for joint targeting, synergies and integration, were not given adequate consideration.

Timeliness and cost efficiency

26. Targeting issues, combined with the slow rollout of WFP's beneficiary information and transfer management platform (SCOPE)⁹ and security and accessibility constraints, led to delays in food assistance delivery. The three crises, the dispersion and size of the operations and logistical and security constraints also made food assistance expensive to deliver. Logistics remained the dominant cost driver. Supply chain costs, especially in-country transport costs, remained high because of the remote location of many beneficiaries and the poor state of transportation infrastructure. Quality and continuity of supply chains were also affected by gaps in WFP's supply chain working group, limited flexibility in resource allocation and the low capacity of cooperating partners.
27. The service offered by the Global Commodity Management Facility mitigated delays by reducing the lead time for food imports and was especially crucial when time-sensitive funding was made available (figure 3). UNHAS aircraft cost-sharing between Cameroon and Chad proved to be very cost-effective and resulted in a 30 percent reduction in the operational costs per passenger between 2017 and 2018.¹⁰ The country office analysed the efficiency and effectiveness of alternative transfer modalities regularly but still lacked consistent cost-effectiveness analysis to inform decision making.

⁹ Eighty percent of CBT beneficiaries to be registered by end of 2019.

¹⁰ Cost per passenger: USD 425 in 2017 and USD 298 in 2018.

Figure 3: Cameroon Global Commodity Management Facility lead-time comparison

When purchasing from GCMF, Cameroon received its food after an average of **one month** as compared to the 120 days needed under the “conventional” procurement process (**74 percent lead-time gain**)

Abbreviations: YTD = year to date.

Source: Global Commodity Management Facility.

What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP?

Mobilization of adequate, predictable and flexible resources

28. The country office was challenged to develop a multi-year funding approach while its main donors, including ECHO and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), worked with a one-year funding cycle. The high level of donor earmarking within the CSP funding structure did not allow for the swapping of commodities. Other donors, such as Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, were moving towards multi-year funding cycles. As a result, more predictable, flexible and diverse funding and engagement with cooperating partners on a long-term basis did not materialize.

Partnership and collaboration

29. The CSP provided greater attention to partnerships and introduced a dedicated outcome to improve partnerships. Active involvement of WFP in the resilience working group and a joint mission with other United Nations agencies in the East region led to effective resource mobilization for resilience programming. An intensive dialogue with FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on support for smallholders' and women's cooperatives and increased access to markets gave visibility to WFP's comparative advantage in these areas.

Human resource capacity and expertise

30. Human resource capacity and expertise for the implementation of the CSP fell short of what was needed given the scale of the CSP targets. Despite important recruitment efforts, 30 percent of the positions were still vacant in September 2019. Weaknesses in terms of management and leadership affected country office strategic positioning, the leveraging of strategic partnerships and funding and CSP integrated programming.

Monitoring and evaluation

31. The country office made an effort to deal with understaffing of the monitoring and evaluation units, which have a good knowledge of ongoing activities. Still, the monitoring and evaluation capacity was insufficient to effectively measure and report performance,

which limited the availability and use of relevant products for evidence-based strategic programming. The monitoring and evaluation system is aligned with corporate requirements, yet fails to effectively capture, contextualize and attribute outcomes, most critically on strategic outcomes 2, 3, 4 and 5. As a result, monitoring and evaluation information was underutilized in strategic decision making.

Conclusions

32. WFP's strategic direction and positioning were relevant to the food and nutrition needs of the population and broadly aligned with national food security, nutrition and social protection priorities, except in building resilience among refugees. The design of the CSP was informed by lessons from WFP's experience in Cameroon, assessed emerging needs and the national zero hunger consultation and was aligned with WFP corporate strategies. However, stronger internal and external operational synergies could have been developed and informed by deeper analysis and understanding of root causes, the contextual complexity of food insecurity and local conflicts and risk mitigation. The multiple crises in Cameroon to which WFP helped respond and the under-resourcing of capacity building activities affected WFP's capacity to pursue effective policy dialogue with government partners and limited national ownership.
33. WFP's core comparative advantages in Cameroon were most evident in its humanitarian response interventions. Those comparative advantages are WFP's food security analysis capacity, strong logistics capacity, experience in cash-based transfers, active support for humanitarian, food security and nutrition sector coordination, and access to communities in remote areas through an operational network of suboffices and cooperating partners. In addition, WFP's partners in Cameroon recognize UNHAS as a key enabler of the humanitarian response.
34. Adapting to evolving circumstances and needs, WFP performed well in emergency food assistance, supporting over 1.6 million people in 2018 and 2019. Despite its promising results school feeding is being scaled down due to funding shortages. Resilience activities received increased attention but remained implemented on a limited scale, which made it hard to assess their effectiveness and sustainability.
35. WFP's blanket supplementary feeding programme brought nutrition and health services closer to the most vulnerable but did not contribute significantly to strengthening the capacities of local structures, which are crucial for the quality and sustainability of service provision. Corporate guidance on nutrition-sensitive programming has only been partially implemented. Links with socioeconomic and agriculture sectors to help promote healthy diets remained weak.
36. WFP support for the implementation of activities aimed at achieving sustainable development goals by national partners was uneven and under-resourced. Progress was achieved in capacity strengthening in the area of food security analysis and in revitalizing food security and cash-programming coordination mechanisms; however, WFP did not pursue all its initial CSP priorities and corresponding outcomes in this domain.
37. WFP adhered to humanitarian principles and maintained its neutrality, although negotiating access to the most vulnerable people in need of food assistance has been challenging in the North-West and South-West regions. There were some serious protection concerns that would have required more attention from WFP, both in terms of the selection of food assistance modalities and deepening engagement with UNHCR. The country office developed operational strategies for linking humanitarian and development assistance but made little effort to mainstream conflict sensitivity into its interventions or to leverage food assistance and resilience activities to contribute to peacebuilding.

38. There was increased integration of gender considerations into programming, contributing to improved gender-sensitive targeting and data collection, but efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment were insufficiently broadened to achieve gender transformative outcomes. WFP had insufficient understanding of gender dynamics, including in connection with gender-based violence, and could have collaborated more with other United Nations agencies and civil society organizations on gender equality.
39. Programme efficiency was marked by slow programme delivery, high transaction costs and recurrent pipeline breaks, mainly due to human and financial resource constraints and severe contextual challenges. The use of the Global Commodity Management Facility was critical to mitigating lead-time management risks. The quality and continuity of supply chains were also affected by gaps in WFP's Supply Chain Working Group, limited flexibility in resource allocation and the low capacity of cooperating partners.
40. Partnerships were crucial to the effectiveness and continuity of WFP's programme. While WFP made sustained efforts to dialogue and coordinate with other United Nations agencies, particularly the Rome-based agencies, on resilience building and value chain development priorities, it did not develop strategic partnerships with major donors or NGOs to support national capacity strengthening.
41. WFP's efforts to put in place the necessary human capacity were not proactive or commensurate with the demands of the CSP or the scale of emerging needs. The country office suffered from a lack of leadership and strategic management, while excessive delays in recruitment resulted in a misalignment between the workforce and programmatic needs.
42. Gaps in monitoring and evaluation limited the country office's ability to demonstrate the relevance and effectiveness of its interventions. The monitoring and evaluation system remained insufficient to enable the systematic measurement of WFP achievements and support evidence-based decision making.
43. Based on the above, the evaluation led to the conclusion that WFP only partially met the ambitious expectations for the shift away from project-based programming to country-level strategic planning and management. The CSP brought WFP's different interventions together under a single, more coherent strategic framework. It improved the alignment of WFP's strategic positioning with national policies and priorities and helped WFP to strengthen its collaboration with other United Nations agencies, particularly the Rome-based agencies. It also gradually led to better integration of gender equality and protection in all intervention areas.
44. On the other hand, the CSP did not fully prepare WFP for the complex crises in the country, which diverted attention and resources away from school feeding, resilience and national capacity building activities. The greater flexibility in funding and more long-term partnerships expected from the CSP approach did not materialize. Country office management did not react swiftly enough to staffing shortages, which impeded fluid and timely programme delivery in Cameroon's challenging context. These factors also limited capacity to deliver beyond the CSP's emergency response objectives and adequately monitor its achievements in other areas. As a result, WFP was not able to instigate a strong shift from "saving lives" to "changing lives", nor did it make significant progress in gradually transferring food security and nutrition support systems to the Government, as intended by the CSP. Both these elements are considered essential to reducing vulnerability and ensuring the sustainability of results.

Recommendations

45. This section presents six recommendations arising from the conclusions of the evaluation. Providing direction for ongoing programming and the design of WFP's next CSP for Cameroon, three of the recommendations are strategic while the others are operational. It is expected that these recommendations will be implemented by the country office, with support from the Regional Bureau for West Africa and headquarters.

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
1.	Strengthen the strategic approaches to nutrition, resilience and capacity strengthening.	Strategic	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters (Nutrition Division, (OSN), Asset Creation and Livelihoods Unit (OSZPR), Country Capacity Strengthening Unit (OSZPC))	High	2020–2021
1.1	Nutrition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Position WFP more clearly as a contributor to a government-led multi-stakeholder preventive strategy and implementation of a joint monitoring and evaluation system. ii) Strengthen the sustainability of nutrition-specific services in emergencies. iii) Reinforce nutrition-sensitive programming with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) contextualized analyses of the underlying causes of malnutrition; b) systematic identification of opportunities in the next CSP; and c) reformulation of field-level agreements. 				

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
1.2	<p>Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Expand the rollout of community-based participatory planning for resilience programming. ii) Develop community-based integrated packages for resilience. iii) Strengthen the implementation of the 2018 multi-year FFA strategy linked with the WFP smallholder support strategy, in collaboration with the other Rome-based agencies. iv) Operationalize the triple nexus principles and priorities, learning from the effects of WFP actions in conflict dynamics and the “do no harm” principle. 				
1.3	<p>Capacity strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Develop a capacity strengthening strategy at the organizational, enabling-environment and individual levels. ii) Prioritize WFP’s comparative advantages in Cameroon. iii) Define WFP’s role in strengthening national capacity in social safety nets, in partnership with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the World Bank and UNHCR on targeting and identification systems; b) UNICEF on school feeding for health and nutrition; and c) FAO on home-grown school feeding. 				

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
2.	Enhance strategic partnerships, funding and advocacy.	Strategic	Country office with support from the regional bureau and headquarters (Public Partnerships and Resourcing Division (PPR), Private Sector Partnerships Division (PGP), Communications, Advocacy and Marketing Division (CAM))	High	2020–2021
2.1	Finalize the fundraising strategy, in line with the next CSP strategic priorities, focusing on: i) diversification of funding sources; ii) resource mobilization for national capacity strengthening; and iii) positioning of WFP as an implementing agency for programmes funded by the Government.				
2.2	Deepen donor engagement in technical dialogue based on evidence and lessons learned from WFP's experience.				
2.3	Strengthen partnerships to support programming and strategic priorities in: i) FFA in refugee settings – UNHCR; ii) a joint implementation strategy to support smallholders using lessons learned on food systems – FAO and IFAD; iii) national capacity to implement an effective nutrition strategy – UNICEF; iv) the 2019 United Nations joint resilience programmes and lessons learned – resilience working group;				

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
	<p>v) mobilization of additional technical expertise on gender and protection – Plan International, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; and</p> <p>vi) national safety nets project and SCOPE – Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development, the World Bank and UNHCR.</p>				
3.	Invest in an evidence base to support the strategic focus and the CSP implementation strategy.	Strategic	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters (Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division (RAM), OSN, Emergency Operations Division (EME), Access to Food Service)	Medium	2020
3.1	<p>In partnership with the food security working group and the nutrition multisector coordination group, consolidate a contextual analysis of underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in order to:</p> <p>i) systematically consider gender and conflict dynamics; and</p> <p>ii) identify opportunities for WFP programming, recognizing Cameroon's diverse context.</p>				

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
3.2	Elaborate a robust theory of change for the next CSP, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) strengthen the results-based management approach by outlining causal pathways in priority areas; ii) clarify and contextualize assumptions underpinning WFP contributions to expected outcomes; and iii) explicitly identify internal and external synergies of WFP programming. 				
3.3	Develop a comprehensive CSP implementation strategy outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) standard operating procedures for targeting, including prioritization criteria and key steps; ii) implementation plans by activity, explicitly clarifying interlinkages; and iii) explicit contingency planning procedures for protecting strategic investments from the redirection of resources to emergency needs. 				2020- mid 2021
4.	Strengthen human capacity to implement ongoing priorities and prepare for the next CSP.	Operational	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters (Human Resources Division (HRM))	High	2020
4.1	Increase support for the country office in programming capacity for operational effectiveness.				
4.2	Accelerate recruitment in priority areas.				
4.3	Strengthen the human resources unit to implement human resource policy systematically.				
4.4	Adjust the organigram to align it with the upcoming CSP for better internal communication, coordination and integrated programming.				2021

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
5.	Improve emergency preparedness, supply chain and programme effectiveness and efficiency.	Operational	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters (EME, Logistics and Field Support Unit, Supply Chain Cash-based Transfers and Markets team)	Medium	2020–2021
5.1	Enhance WFP emergency preparedness mechanisms to enable appropriate Level 2 response through stronger contingency planning, emergency logistics capacity and capacity to support cooperating partners.				2020
5.2	Strengthen food pipeline management for accurate food allocation by attracting more attention to and dedicated resources for: i) enforcement of commodity needs forecasts; and ii) call-forward procedures put in place through the Supply Chain Working Group.				
5.3	Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of ongoing operational partnerships, by: i) limiting the number of cooperating partners and reviewing their capacity to adopt multisectoral approaches and their cross-cutting theme expertise; and ii) optimizing the implementation of the field-level agreement system to minimize discontinuity between contracts.				
5.4	Finalize the comparative efficiency analysis to complement the ex-ante effectiveness analysis to inform modalities selection appropriate to contexts.				

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of prioritization	When
6.	Strengthen monitoring and evaluation, knowledge-sharing and communication about results.	Operational	Country office, with support from the regional bureau and headquarters (RAM, Performance Management and Reporting Division (CPP-RMP), CAM)	Medium	2020–2021
6.1	Improve the effectiveness and timeliness of process and results measurement by: i) designing SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-bound) monitoring indicators for CSP outputs and outcomes; and ii) measuring consistent and coherent values for intermediate and final targets.				
6.2	Invest in monitoring and evaluation capacity to assess the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of WFP support for Cameroon.				
6.3	Enhance the communication of programme evidence and lessons learned, by: i) ensuring the timely publication of survey and assessment reports; ii) setting up learning mechanisms to generate positive stories based on experience; and iii) facilitating regular exchanges among suboffices to enable learning and the proactive sharing of experiences.				

Acronyms

CBT	cash-based transfer
CSP	country strategic plan
ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFA	food assistance for assets
IDP	internally displaced person
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
NGO	non-governmental organization
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