

TALKING POINTS – EB.2/2014 : Democratic Republic of Congo CPE

EVALUATION DESCRIPTION

- Covering the period 2009–2013, the CPE assessed the performance of WFP DRC's portfolio focusing on: i) strategic alignment and positioning; ii) factors driving strategic decision-making; and iii) performance and results.

PORTFOLIO DESCRIPTION

- DRC has one of WFP's largest portfolios¹. It consists of three Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRROs) – including the ongoing 200540 -, five emergency operations (EMOPs), including an immediate response emergency operation (IRA-EMOP) and two Special Operations (SOs) for logistics augmentation. In 2013, programme activities were grouped under one PRRO to enable WFP to present a complete strategy allowing for greater flexibility in the use of resources. The main portfolio activities are: General Food Distribution (GFD)² - in-kind or in cash and vouchers³; school feeding⁴; nutritional interventions⁵; food-assistance-for-assets⁶.

CONTEXT

- DRC is both a low-income, food-deficit and a least-developed country. Over the last two decades, DRC has had two major wars linked to instability in North and South Kivu in the east of the country following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the arrival of approximately 1.2 million Rwandan refugees. The 2009–2013 period was characterized by internal displacements and returns in North and South Kivu, Province Orientale and Katanga. North and South Kivu account for at least 50 percent of the current 2.7 million IDPs.
- DRC presents serious challenges with security and communications infrastructure for the humanitarian actors assisting large numbers of people affected by protracted conflicts and chronic food insecurity.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Relevance and appropriateness of the portfolio

- The evaluation found that WFP activities were relevant and appropriate to the complex and difficult environment, but geographical coverage and allocations of resources were not always proportional to needs across regions or among activities. With needs outstripping the capacity to supply them, the country office had to operate a difficult balancing of its components in order to meet the needs. In line with its primary mandate, WFP positioned itself almost exclusively in the framework of humanitarian action (aligned to the Humanitarian Action Plan), investing little in long-term planning mechanisms⁷.

¹ WFP direct expenditures over the evaluation period were 134.3 million US\$ for EMOPs, 927 million US\$ for PRROs and 52 million US\$ for the SOs, confirming the dominance of emergency programming in DRC. During the CPE period, WFP fed 3.5 million beneficiaries annually with 462,870 metric tons of commodities.

² GFD represented 82 percent of the portfolio beneficiaries in 2009 (42 percent in 2013)

³ C&V represented 9 percent of the total GFD value in 2013 (representing about 6 million US\$)

⁴ School feeding reached 1.3 million children in 2,600 schools in 2013 (WFP assisted 396,000 children in 2009)

⁵ MAM treatment = 300,000 annually; HIV patients = 30,000 annually; Blanket Feeding = 149,000 beneficiaries in 2013; PLW = 94,000 beneficiaries in 2013.

⁶ FFA reached 296,000 beneficiaries in 2013 (44,000 in 2009) in 3 provinces (Katanga, North and South Kivu).

⁷ Opportunities for WFP to position itself in development-oriented frameworks and actions were underexploited, except for the P4P project through which WFP purchased 246 mt of commodities (11 percent of local purchases) in 2013. WFP did not explore opportunities for development funding.

- The evaluation found the portfolio objectives and activities were aligned with corporate objectives, DRC strategic frameworks and national policies. However, limited opportunities for dialogue and weak engagement of national authorities hampered the prospects for partnerships. The Government is recently enhancing its role in leadership and the establishment of coordination frameworks, to reinforce coordination particularly with United Nations agencies.
- The evaluation also found WFP's objectives consistent with international humanitarian principles and good practices, but these were sometimes compromised by implementation strategies⁸.

Effectiveness and efficiency

- Financial constraints and inadequate human resources, hindered the country office's capacity to engage in institutional mechanisms at the strategic level and in seeking creative solutions to operational challenges. Inadequate technical capacity also hampered efforts to identify synergies particularly in activities where integration would have improved results, and considering the structural factors and protracted nature of needs.
- WFP's capacity to respond quickly to new needs on time and proportionately was undermined by the absence of a strategy adapted to volatile contexts, clear operational guidelines flexibility and the capacity to seize opportunities for improving performance⁹. The slow introduction of targeting based on vulnerability assessments, particularly in the Goma camps, weakened the effectiveness and efficiency of GFD¹⁰.
- The use of C&V was marginal compared with its potential¹¹. Testing of C&V modalities in 2011 led to a scale-up plan, which was reduced in 2012 mainly for security reasons, high food prices in North Kivu, staffing and management issues. This resulted in WFP losing momentum, while cooperating partners capitalized on the learning gained from WFP experience.
- Despite their low coverage, nutrition interventions were effective and reported to increase attendance at health centres¹². WFP also assisted HIV patients undergoing ART, reinforcing their adherence to treatment and improving their nutrition status. According to school statistics, enrolment and retention rates for boys and girls improved in targeted schools. GFD and FFA were also effective and improved the food consumption score of the target groups¹³.
- For most operations more beneficiaries were reached than planned, particularly for schoolfeeding for which coverage grew to 3.5 times its original size during the CPE period, requiring additional resources. WFP had to reduce the ration size and the number of feeding days to reach schoolchildren, reducing effectiveness. Resource shortfalls also impacted negatively on GFD beneficiaries who received reduced individual rations/calories.

⁸ For example, sometimes geographic and household targeting was not sufficiently independent, compromising impartiality, and sometimes, armed escorts were provided by a party to the conflict, compromising neutrality, impartiality and independence. The reduction of ration sizes in response to pipeline breaks is inconsistent with Sphere standards.

⁹ WFP deliveries arrived after the acute phase i.e. between 45 and 90 days after the first rapid response to population movements (RRMP) mechanism for non-food items.

¹⁰ Targeting based on household vulnerability in the Goma camps was not introduced during the evaluation period, although three surveys conducted between 2011 and 2014 found that 31–44 percent of IDPs living in the camps were not vulnerable.

¹¹ About USD 6 million was distributed through C&V programmes in five provinces (represents 9 percent of GFD in 2013)

¹² There is documented evidence in partners reports, of increased attendance of PLW in health centres by an average of 20% in some centres.

¹³ About 88.4 percent of GFD, FFA and C&V beneficiaries had acceptable or borderline FCS. FCS deteriorated for GFD and C&V beneficiaries when deliveries were delayed.

- Logistics support was relatively good. As well as supporting WFP operations, WFP's logistics services for the humanitarian community met genuine needs.
- The evaluation found that issues such as, **gender, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)**, protection and security, the environment and do-no-harm were not consistently addressed¹⁴.
- Overall the performance and results of the portfolio were measured mainly through output-level data. Direct monitoring was limited by access restrictions, staffing and funding shortages. The monitoring system needs improvement, with WFP exploring options such as third-party monitoring.

Sustainability

- Few opportunities for developing strategies with national authorities were identified, during the evaluation period, given the fragile institutional environment and WFP's weak capacity to participate in recovery and development-oriented frameworks. The policies, dialogue and coordination frameworks now in place at the central and provincial levels expand WFP's prospects for developing partnerships/synergies to reinforce programme effectiveness and sustainability.
- School feeding is not sustainable in its current form. The lessons learned from approaches developed in the provinces where local governments showed interest could facilitate decentralized programmes.

IN CONCLUSION, the evaluation established that **WFP is still considered an essential actor in the DRC**. Although its strategic position in some areas deteriorated during the evaluation period, the country office has taken recent measures, through extensive consultations during the formulation of the WFP Country Strategy¹⁵, to lay the basis for restoring stakeholder confidence.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS made are coherent with the priorities of WFP's Country Strategy (2013–2017) and are designed to reinforce WFP's implementation capacities and prospects in DRC. They focus on:

- Strengthening WFP's response capacity for emergency interventions;
- Staffing, targeting, M&E needs and system's review for increased programme effectiveness;
- Increasing the use of alternative food assistance modalities(e.g. C&V);
- Reinforcing cooperation with Government entities (both central and regional levels) and synergies with UN agencies for programme sustainability.

¹⁴ Recommendations on gender issues of past WFP missions were still not implemented: e.g. Gender evaluation: *DRC case study*, 2013; on SGBV: WFP mission 2011.

¹⁵ Strategic discussions with various stakeholders (Government, UN agencies, NGOs and donors) took place took place in 2013 and early 2014. This process helped WFP communicate better on its priorities/strategies and restore donor confidence.