



World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي

Executive Board
Second regular session
Rome, 16–20 November 2020

Distribution: General	Agenda item 6
Date: 3 November 2020	WFP/EB.2/2020/6-B/Rev.1*
Original: English	Evaluation reports
*Reissued for technical reasons on 11 November 2020	For consideration

Executive Board documents are available on WFP's website (<https://executiveboard.wfp.org>).

Summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2018–2020)

Executive summary

An evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 2018–2020 was conducted between October 2019 and March 2020 and covered WFP strategy, interventions and systems for the period between 2017 and 2019. Taking a utilization-focused and consultative approach, the evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of the new country strategic plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Over the period 2018–2019 WFP successfully expanded its emergency assistance in response to a growing number of crises in an extremely challenging physical, social and institutional environment. Food assistance was well-targeted on areas affected by conflict or other serious shocks, but rations had to be selectively reduced to reach increasing numbers of targeted beneficiaries in the face of funding gaps and delays. Nutrition support focused mainly on moderate acute malnutrition treatment while malnutrition prevention received fewer resources. A significant increase in funding allowed the expansion of resilience interventions, some of which were linked to a growing home-grown school feeding programme. WFP also effectively supported humanitarian supply chains and telecommunications. The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service also performed well.

While some key measures were put in place to enhance the protection of WFP target population groups, there was a lack of risk analysis, monitoring and budget for this purpose. Efforts to ensure

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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accountability to affected populations also gained momentum, but complaints were often not addressed in time. Gender equality and women's empowerment were well integrated into resilience activities and likely to improve women's socioeconomic status, but sick people and people with disabilities tended to be left behind in those activities.

Despite a consistent effort to ensure the timely delivery of assistance, WFP programmes were affected by significant delays on the ground, sometimes with severe consequences for affected people. The cost of distributing food and cash-based transfers was comparable to such costs in countries with similarly challenging conditions.

The interim country strategic plan did not lead to a significant shift in WFP's partnerships. WFP did not maintain strong political links with the national government, and partnerships with cooperating partners could have been more strategic. The plan provided WFP with a single frame of reference for dialogue with its donors, who responded with funding in line with the increased needs. At the same time, donor earmarking of funding remained significant, limiting WFP's flexibility and ability to react quickly.

WFP operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are highly decentralized and monitoring and reporting systems do not allow for effective data-driven decision making and adaptation. Measures are being taken to strengthen staff capacity and processes for better management of the considerable fraud and security risks to operations.

In sum, thanks to its strong capabilities in assessments, food assistance, supply chains and fundraising, WFP has been able to respond to consecutive and increasing emergencies in the country, but the growing need for food assistance was only partially met owing to funding constraints. At times, WFP's operations were stretched to the limit because of staffing gaps and inadequate systems for internal monitoring and risk management, commensurate with the scale of operations and the setting. There is also room for building more strategic partnerships for better integration of resilience and peacebuilding into WFP assistance so that WFP can make a larger contribution to addressing structural food security and nutrition vulnerabilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The evaluation makes three strategic and three operational recommendations. The first two regard WFP's strategic positioning in the country, recommending that WFP maintain its critical lead role in emergency food assistance but also contribute more resolutely to addressing structural vulnerabilities. To enable this, the third recommendation is that WFP engage more strategically with donors, the Government and cooperating partners. The operational recommendations are for WFP to increase attention on important issues that cut across all interventions: monitoring and evaluation and risk controls, gender equity, protection of people and the environment, conflict sensitivity and accountability to affected populations.

Draft decision*

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the interim country strategic plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2018–2020) (WFP/EB.2/2020/6-B/Rev.1) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2020/6-B/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 interim country strategic plan (ICSP) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo was conducted between October 2019 and March 2020 and covered WFP strategy, interventions and systems for the period between 2017 and 2019. It served the dual purpose of accountability and learning by assessing the actual results achieved against plans while creating opportunities for learning at the national, regional and corporate levels. The results of the evaluation informed the preparation of the new country strategic plan (CSP) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
2. The evaluation took a utilization-focused and consultative approach. During the evaluation's inception phase, the evaluation team identified four thematic areas of particular relevance to the country that helped define the lines of enquiry for each evaluation question: WFP's adaptation to extreme conditions in the country; the integration of WFP's interventions within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus; priority setting and targeting; and strategic partnerships.
3. The main evaluation mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo took place over three and a half weeks in November and December 2019. It included interviews with a variety of stakeholders in the capital and during two weeks of field visits to WFP intervention areas. The evaluation also included a community mini-survey to explore perceptions of WFP's performance in targeting and accountability to affected populations. Evaluation findings and recommendations were discussed internally at WFP during an online workshop in March 2020.
4. The evaluation focused on the gender dimension of programmes by recognizing cultural biases, achieving a gender balance in survey respondents, seeking out beneficiary groups of women and girls and analysing results from the perspective of women. Limitations of the evaluation were inconsistencies in outcome-level data among provinces, changes in reporting formats over the evaluation period and restricted access to some field locations and activities because of security constraints and Ebola-related travel restrictions. However, adequate data were available and sufficient sites were visited to offer insights on all priority themes, interventions and processes.

Context

5. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second largest country in Africa, endowed with abundant natural resources and a young, highly diverse population of about 84 million people that is expected to double in the next twenty years. Agriculture employs 70 percent of the population and provides 40 percent of gross domestic product. Despite very favourable natural conditions for agriculture, the vast majority of farmers are subsistence farmers and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a food-deficit country. Decades of poor governance and foreign interference have created fragile situations throughout the country, characterized by dysfunctional institutions with widespread corruption, highly deteriorated public infrastructure and poor public services, recurring conflict and violence mostly linked to natural resources, forced movement of populations, disease outbreaks, limited access to agricultural land and markets and restricted humanitarian access.
6. The Congolese conflicts started in 1996 and constitute one of the world's most severe prolonged crises. Despite several peace agreements, intermittent cycles of severe conflict continue to affect the eastern provinces. Intercommunal and interethnic conflict is also frequent, and the number of internally displaced persons has steadily increased to 4.5 million. About 0.9 million Congolese have fled the country, while about 0.5 million

refugees fleeing violence in neighbouring countries have taken refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since the start of 2018, the country has experienced two separate Ebola outbreaks, first in Equateur Province and then in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. The later outbreak is by far the country's largest on record and is classified as a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO). The country also experienced outbreaks of measles and cholera in 2019.

7. In this context, development indicators remain extremely low, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo ranked 179th of 189 countries on the Human Development Index in 2019 (table 1). An estimated 76.6 percent of the population lives on less than USD 1.90 a day. In 2019, 15.6 million people, including 4.6 million children, were in Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) category 3 or higher (crisis and famine levels). A further 27 million people were in IPC category 2 (stressed). Stunting affected 43 percent of children under 5, while 8 percent suffered from wasting and 22 percent were underweight. Internally displaced people and returnees affected by armed conflict are the groups most affected by acute food insecurity.

	Indicator	2017	2019
1	Total population (1)	81 398 764	84 068 091 (2018)
2	GDP per capita (USD PPP) (1)	888.6	932.1 (2018)
3	Urban population as percent of total population (1)	43.88	44.46 (2018)
4	Human Development Index score and ranking (2)	0.435 (176th of 188) (2016)	0.459 (179th of 189)
5	Population < poverty line PPP USD 1.90 a day (%) (2)	77.1 (2016)	76.6
6	Population in severe multidimensional poverty (%) (2)	72.5 (2016)	74.0
7	Life expectancy at birth (2)	59.1(2016)	60.4
8	Percent of children under 5 who are stunted (2)	42.6 (2010–2015)	42.7 (2010–2016)
9	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births) (2)	693 (2016)	693
10	Prevalence of HIV (percent of population age 15–49)	0.8 (2016)	0.7 (2018)
11	Gender Inequality Index (2)	0.663 (153rd of 160)	0.655 (156th of 160)
12	Percent of population age 25 and over with at least secondary education (2)	Women: 14.5 Men: 35.0 (2005–2015)	Women: 36.7 Men: 65.8 (2010–2018)
13	Labour force participation rate (percent of total population age 15+ and over) (2)	Women and girls: 70.5 Men and boys: 71.8	Women and girls: 60.8 Men and boys: 66.5

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

Sources: 1) World Bank; 2) human development reports and statistical updates 2016–2019.

The interim country strategic plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo

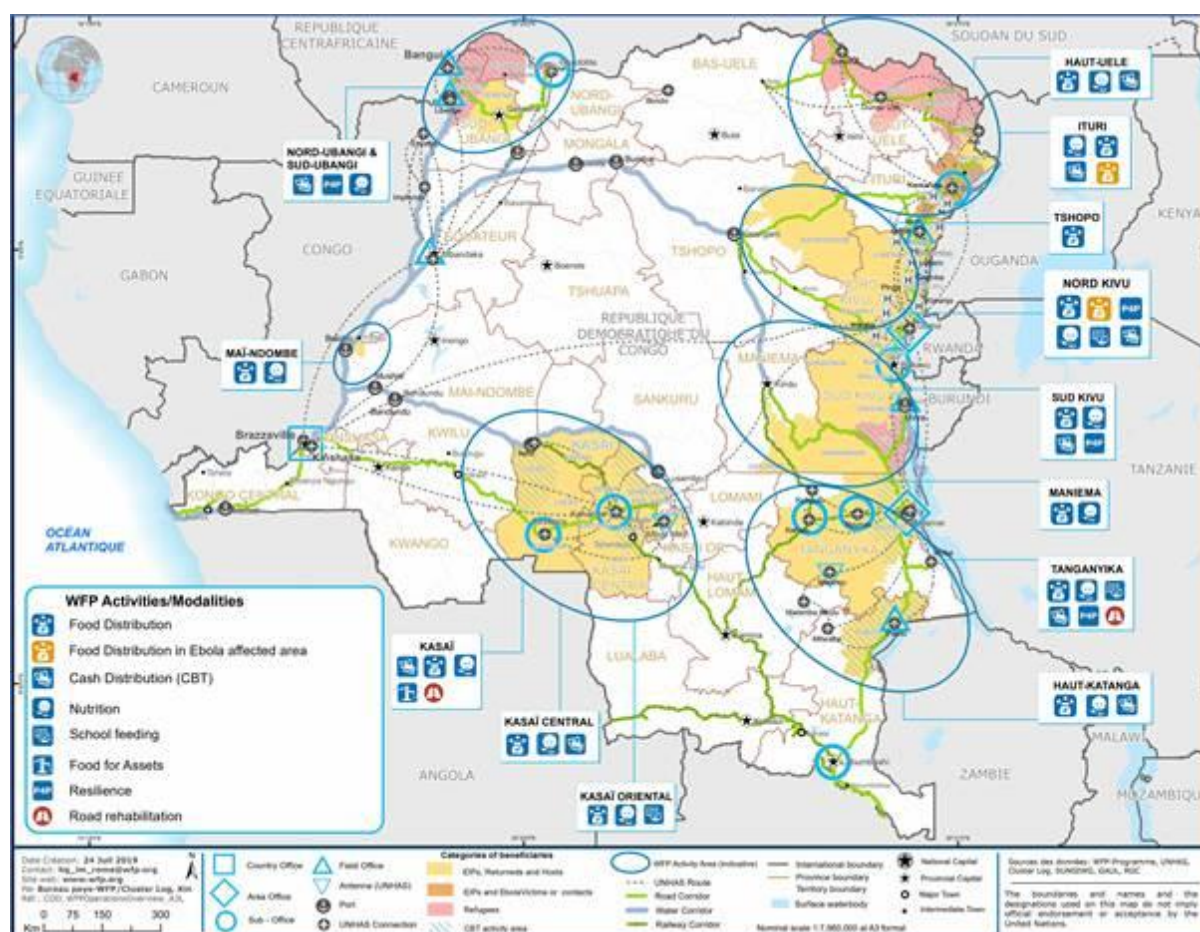
8. Prior to the ICSP, the bulk of WFP support was directed to delivering food assistance for victims of armed conflict and for other vulnerable groups and supporting logistics for the humanitarian community. In response to the changing political situation, it was decided that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo a full CSP would be preceded by an ICSP covering the period from 2018 to 2020 without introducing any major strategic shifts. The ICSP has the aim of achieving the five strategic outcomes presented in table 2.

Strategic outcome	Percent of total	
	Original budget (% of total)	Budget revision 5 (% of total)
1: Targeted food-insecure populations affected by shocks are able to meet their basic food requirements in times of crisis	66	59
2: Food-insecure and vulnerable populations in conflict- and shock-affected areas have improved nutrition status in line with national protocols by 2020	7	22
3: Smallholder farmers and vulnerable communities in targeted and crisis-prone areas, especially in eastern parts of the country, enhance their productive livelihoods and improve their food security and resilience by 2020	9	8
4: National institutions have strengthened capacity to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition and respond to shocks by 2020	1	1
5: The humanitarian community has the capacity to respond to shocks through strategic partnerships by 2020	16	10
Total	100	100

Sources: Democratic Republic of the Congo interim country strategic plan (2018–2020) and Democratic Republic of the Congo interim country strategic plan, revision 5.

9. The original ICSP foresaw an overall budget of approximately USD 723 million and a total of 6.7 million beneficiaries over three years. The budget was revised upwards five times in 2018 and 2019 to align it with increases in need resulting from a deteriorating humanitarian situation, bringing the overall budget to USD 1.19 billion and almost doubling the number of planned beneficiaries to 11.7 million. WFP received funding from 24 donors during the evaluation period, with the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Germany the largest contributors.
10. In 2019, WFP intervened in 10 of the country's 26 provinces (figure 1). In addition to the country office in Kinshasa, WFP also had 19 area and suboffices in the country employing 643 staff members.

Figure 1: WFP operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: WFP, 2019.

Evaluation 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?

Strategic relevance and adaptability

11. The ICSP was well aligned with national policies and objectives in being grounded mainly in the sustainable development goals. WFP interventions were relevant to the diverse needs of the target groups defined in the ICSP document. The majority of WFP's efforts were focused on responding to emergencies and the chronic needs of food-insecure people identified through local-level food security and vulnerability assessments. The extent to which needs were met was undermined by a lack of timely provided resources, leading to reduced food and cash-based rations and short distribution cycles aimed at reaching as many targeted beneficiaries as possible. WFP adapted well to changing needs, for example for the treatment of malnutrition.
12. Its well-recognized capacity in assessment, humanitarian supply chains and common services provision gave WFP a significant comparative advantage in targeting and delivering assistance with speed and at scale in a very difficult environment. WFP also showed an ability to remain flexible and respond to new crises, as evidenced by its response to the Ebola crisis. However, this flexibility was strongly determined by donor support.

Alignment and coherence with other United Nations activities

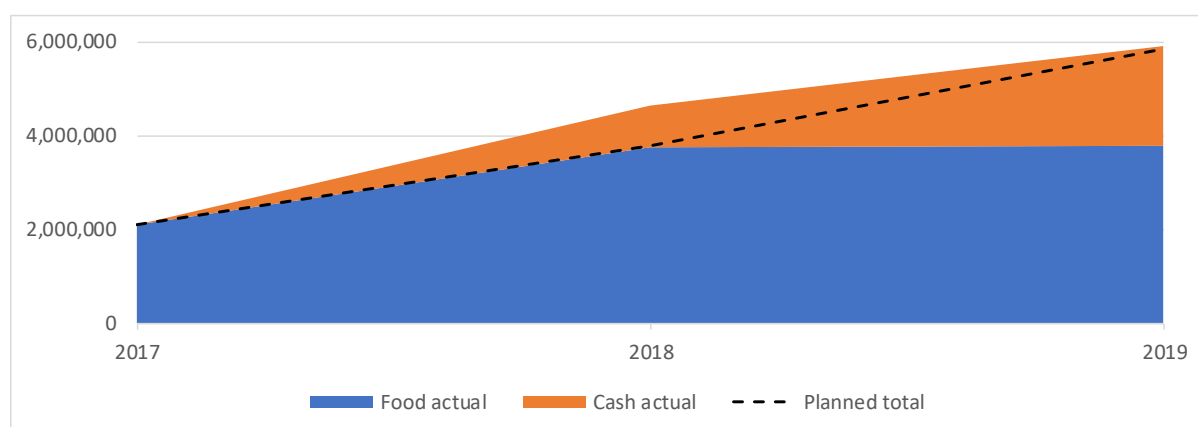
13. WFP interventions were grounded in the United Nations development assistance framework that ended in 2017, the 2019 common country assessment and the humanitarian response plan for 2017–2019. Well-developed mechanisms exist to ensure coherence between United Nations agencies and the cluster system, facilitating information exchange and coordination. WFP has a strong partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which is evolving further in the area of resilience programming. Partnerships with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are longstanding and clearly defined, and there is scope to strengthen the partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) flights are vital to the humanitarian community and pivotal in the Ebola response.

What is the extent and quality of WFP’s specific contribution to the strategic outcomes of the interim country strategic plan?

Delivery of outputs and contribution to outcomes

14. The number of beneficiaries reached increased consistently over the evaluation period and was about 90 percent of the target. However, the extent to which target numbers of beneficiaries and underlying outcomes were achieved varied by strategic outcome. The vast majority of beneficiaries reached were under strategic outcome 1, through which WFP provided food assistance (in-kind food and, increasingly, cash-based transfers) to people affected by conflict and other crises (figure 2). However, the total value of cash-based transfers and quantity of food distributed was markedly below planned amounts, as rations were selectively reduced to reach increasing numbers of targeted beneficiaries. Food security improved in areas where tensions abated but continued to deteriorate in areas affected by conflict or other shocks such as Ebola, although WFP assistance very probably reduced this deterioration. Over the period, WFP notably increased the number of schools supported with school feeding, mainly in the most food-insecure and conflict-affected areas.

Figure 2: Number of people affected by conflict or other shocks reached through unconditional food assistance



Sources: 2017 data from 2018 annual country report, 2018 and 2019 data from the country office management tool, COMET.

15. Under strategic outcome 2 (on nutrition) the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition through targeted supplementary feeding was emphasized, and there was a significant improvement in reaching targeted beneficiaries between 2018 and 2019. Prevention of acute and chronic malnutrition through blanket supplementary feeding consistently reached significantly fewer beneficiaries than targeted, owing to a lack of timely funding and

- logistics challenges. Health centre data appear to indicate that the efficacy of moderate acute malnutrition treatment was well above minimum Sphere standards in all provinces.
16. Under strategic outcome 3 WFP provided technical assistance to smallholder farmer organizations through purchase for progress initiatives, food assistance for assets and food assistance for training on nutrition. The prioritization of emergency assistance resulted in under-attainment of planned beneficiary numbers in resilience activities, although a significant increase in funding allowed an expansion of activities and beneficiary numbers over the evaluation period. Supported farmer organizations were mostly for women and were linked to home-grown school feeding initiatives. The home-grown school feeding programme suffered from underfunding and was drastically scaled down until 2019, when renewed donor support allowed WFP to expand it again. Food assistance for assets activities increased substantially in 2019, strengthening long-term resilience through improved infrastructure and access to markets while addressing immediate food security needs.
 17. To achieve strategic outcome 4, WFP set out to strengthen government capacity in relation to social protection, nutrition, food security, emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction and the provision of evidence-based analysis. Because of resource constraints, these activities were limited to training for government staff on food security monitoring and early warning and, in North Kivu, on disaster preparedness.
 18. The main activities under strategic outcome 5 were the provision of technical support for logistics through coordination and information management platforms and UNHAS transport services. WFP supported humanitarian supply chains and telecommunications effectively, leading the logistics cluster, providing transport and storage services and, until October 2018, leading the emergency communications cluster. UNHAS also performed well in 2018 and 2019, demonstrating vital flexibility in scaling up services in response to the Ebola emergency.

Protection and accountability to affected populations

19. Humanitarian principles were generally well respected in WFP interventions. Protection is a growing priority for WFP and key measures have been put in place to enhance the protection of WFP target population groups, although the evaluation found a lack of risk analysis, monitoring and resources for this purpose. Accountability to affected populations gained momentum, but feedback and complaints were not systematically followed up on or addressed in time. There were weaknesses in the complaint mechanisms used, and affected populations were either unaware of them or reluctant to use them. However, steps have already been taken to address some of these weaknesses.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

20. Addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence is considered fundamental to addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ICSP was not grounded in a comprehensive country-level gender analysis. Gender considerations were integrated into food and cash-based transfers mainly through the preferential naming of women as beneficiaries on distribution lists, but this was insufficient to change gender dynamics. While interventions targeted a slightly larger number of women than men, the proportion of women reached relative to targets was consistently lower than that of men and decreased to 77 percent in 2019. However, there was better integration in resilience activities, which are considered more likely than other interventions to improve women's social and economic status in the community and household.

Sustainability and the triple nexus approach

21. Contributing to sustainability, WFP has engaged in extensive capacity building activities aimed at creating national capacity for food security assessment. Conditional food assistance allowed WFP to position itself at the triple nexus (figure 3) to some extent in some programmes. However, peacebuilding elements remained area-specific and were not explicitly embedded in strategy. Local exit strategies for moving from unconditional to conditional forms of assistance were often not clearly articulated, and there was insufficient tracking of and support for beneficiaries beyond emergencies with a view to strengthening their resilience and reducing dependency on emergency support in the long term. Environmental sustainability was poorly integrated into the ICSP and there is a need to strengthen technical expertise on environmental risk identification and mitigation.

Figure 3: WFP assistance within the triple nexus in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: ICSP evaluation

To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to the outputs and strategic outcomes of the interim country strategic plan?

Timeliness

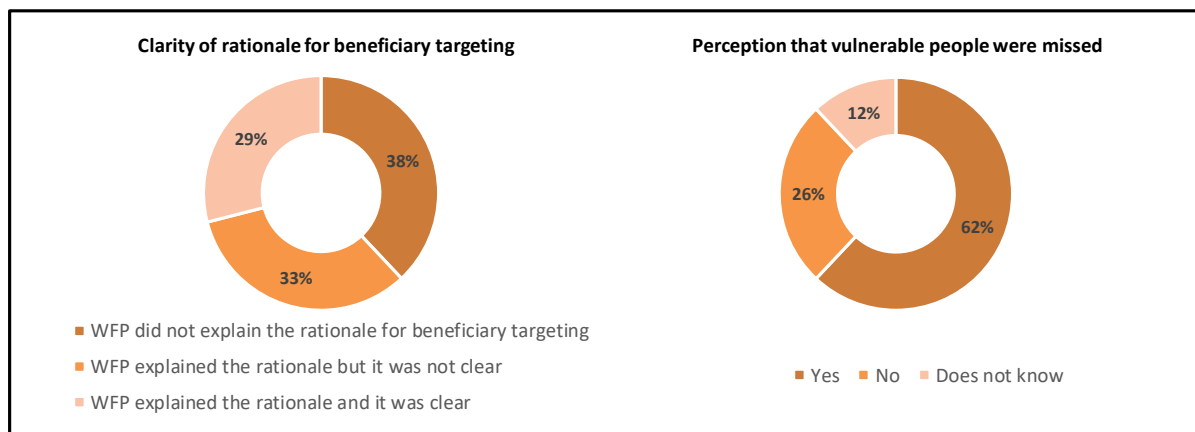
22. Despite a consistent effort to ensure the timely delivery of assistance, WFP programmes were affected by significant delays on the ground. These were attributed to the rapid expansion of operations in a particularly challenging setting, delays in obtaining funding because of limited multi-year funding and lengthy negotiations with donors, coordination issues and staffing shortages. The unintended consequences of delays were sometimes severe, forcing internally displaced persons and refugees to adopt harmful coping strategies with negative impacts on themselves and host populations, in the worst cases increasing the risk of starvation of the most food insecure.

Coverage and targeting

23. WFP operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo increased geographical coverage in response to the evolving food insecurity and malnutrition situation. However, the scale of needs in the country is vast and, despite the expansion of WFP's food assistance, unmet needs are significant, mainly owing to funding constraints. Effective assessment and

targeting of the most vulnerable households relied heavily on the capacity of cooperating partners, which varied greatly, as did community perceptions of targeting effectiveness (figure 4). Sick people and those with disabilities tended to be excluded, particularly – but not only – from resilience building activities.

Figure 4: Target population perceptions of the clarity of targeting and the vulnerability of people not selected



Source: Community survey for the ICSP evaluation.

Cost efficiency

24. WFP was able to mobilize substantial resources by the end of 2019 but not to disburse all the available funds, mainly because of their late availability. The direct support cost ratio was difficult to forecast owing to unexpected local implementation costs. However, food distribution and cash-based transfer costs decreased since 2018 and costs per beneficiary were considerably lower than forecast, although this can largely be attributed to reduced rations per beneficiary.
25. Measures for keeping costs in check included the selection of appropriate assistance modalities based on operational costs and market analyses; mitigation of fraud risk, for instance through introduction of the SCOPE beneficiary registration system to eliminate multiple registrations in emergency and resilience activities; reduction of transport costs; assignment of responsibility for losses to cooperating partners; and pooling of resources with other United Nations agencies.

What are the factors that explain WFP's performance and the extent to which WFP has made the strategic shift expected under the interim country strategic plan?

Understanding of context and needs

26. WFP has made extensive use of assessment data on the food security situation, as reflected in the ICSP and the targeting and selection of interventions. WFP is the co-lead agency on food security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, overall, most of the evidence and analysis it produced was in this area. The ICSP was informed by context analyses and data provided by the Government, other United Nations agencies and other organizations.

Funding

27. As regards funding of WFP in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the ICSP provides WFP a single frame of reference for dialogue with donors. Donors were highly attentive to the operational needs of WFP and provided funding in line with increases in target areas and numbers of people in need. At the same time, donor earmarking of funding increased compared with the period prior to the ICSP and contributions sometimes arrived late, limiting WFP's flexibility and ability to react quickly. Funding was directed mainly to crisis response, but donors expressed continued interest in promoting resilience and long-term approaches to addressing the root causes of vulnerability.

Monitoring and reporting

28. WFP has a highly decentralized operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo led by suboffices. At times, it suffered from unclear lines of accountability and limited information flows. WFP's monitoring systems were inadequate for effective data-driven decision making and adaptation to changing conditions. In line with corporate processes, the country office used multiple corporate information management platforms to gather vast amounts of information. However, data analysis and information sharing with programme managers were limited. This, combined with a lack of evaluations and audits¹ since 2014, made it difficult for WFP to assess its performance and identify emerging issues to inform effective decision making.

Staffing and risks to operations

29. Significant staffing shortages had a negative impact on the timeliness and monitoring of operations. Substantial risks pertaining to fraud, security and human resource management highlight the need to strengthen operational risk management systems and address the limited awareness of staff of the WFP risk management system. The recruitment of a compliance adviser in August 2019 is expected to strengthen capacities in this area.

Conclusions

WFP is working in an exceptionally difficult environment with an unprecedented range of needs through an operation that is close to the limit of its capacity.

30. WFP interventions were broadly aligned with the ICSP, and the ICSP was coherent with current policies and strategies of national and international actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The scope of operations continued to increase in volume and geographical coverage over the evaluation period, in line with evolving needs in the country. In spite of the promising prospect of a new government and sustained donor support, the food security outlook in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is discouraging. WFP's response was based on comparatively strong supply chain management and its provision of common services, responding at scale to a continually evolving situation. Its field presence, technical expertise and broad donor base allowed WFP to engage effectively, at times using innovative approaches.

¹ In the first half of 2020, the WFP Office of Internal Audit conducted an internal audit of WFP operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo focused on the period 1 January to 31 December 2019. This audit was published after the report for this interim country strategic plan evaluation was prepared.

31. The evidence, however, also shows an operation that – while responding courageously to growing needs – was at times stretched to the limit of its capacities. This was primarily because of the ambitious objectives of the ICSP and the rapid increase in beneficiary needs in an extremely difficult physical, social and institutional environment. There were multiple delays and breaks in delivery in the field caused by discontinuities and lack of flexibility in funding, human resource gaps and pipeline breaks, among other factors. The structure of the ICSP encouraged “siloed” activities to the detriment of a more strategic, integrated and risk-focused approach that might have supported a more fluid transition from emergency response to resilience building.

The extent to which WFP is able to perform well is determined by its ability to understand emerging local needs and manage risks to operations and affected populations.

32. Strong food security and nutrition assessments helped WFP to establish priorities in a challenging environment without a detailed national policy framework. At the same time, beneficiary feedback mechanisms were insufficient, and while WFP strengthened considerably its capacity to address cross-cutting priorities regarding gender equality, accountability to affected populations, climate change and conflict sensitivity, implementation in all of these areas still lacked depth.
33. WFP’s strongly decentralized approach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo allowed for close-to-the-field planning and monitoring and rapid decision making but also introduced important management risks, especially when information and control systems were not functioning well. There were also important risks to people and communities, which were analysed comprehensively. WFP staff in the country were fully aware of these risks, and measures to mitigate them were integrated into the design and implementation of programmes, with a special focus on gender dimensions. However, monitoring and reporting in relation to the protection, gender and environmental risks faced by assisted people were highly fragmented.

More strategic partnerships are required to better integrate resilience and peacebuilding so that WFP can make a greater contribution to addressing structural food security and nutrition vulnerabilities.

34. Most United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations highlight WFP’s strong performance as a leader in humanitarian response. At the same time, a conceptualization of the triple humanitarian–development–peace nexus is emerging, with the ICSP spanning emergency response, development and (in some places) initiatives that promote social cohesion and peace. This work would be strengthened if WFP increased its joint engagement and support with partners while preserving the rapid response capacity for which it is highly regarded.
35. WFP has been operating in support of the Government, collaborating with several institutions and on various levels without a clear strategy. Consultations with the recently formed government provide a valuable opportunity to ensure that the priorities of the new CSP are aligned with the Government’s vision and priorities for the future of the country.
36. Delivery through cooperating partners has enabled WFP to deliver effectively. However, there is room for WFP to be more strategically engaged with partners through regular consultations and long-term collaboration agreements, which would enhance the continuity of programming on the ground.

Recommendations

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
1	Upgrade WFP's emergency response capacity, including through greater coverage of food security assessments, increased timeliness of response and better adaptation of food assistance modalities to beneficiaries' needs.	Strategic	Country office	High	2020–2022
1.1	Contribute to efforts to broaden the IPC to the whole country by supporting food security assessments in areas not currently covered.		Country office		2022
1.2	Increase the timeliness of WFP operations by sensitizing donors to the importance of early availability and more flexible allocation of funds and in-kind contributions and increasing the number and capacities of staff in line with the growing scale of interventions.		Country office programme, donor relations and human resources units		2021
1.3	Adjust the length of food and cash-based transfer distribution cycles to the needs of the people assisted rather than adopting generic cycles.		Country office programme unit		2020
1.4	Consider increasing the use of cash-based delivery mechanisms in partnership with private sector entities in areas such as mobile transfers, selected based on a thorough assessment of private sector partner capacity.		Country office cash-based transfer team		2023

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
2	Use WFP's comparative advantages beyond humanitarian assistance to support partners engaged in the development and peacebuilding components of the triple nexus.	Strategic	Country office	Medium	2021-2022
2.1	Expand joint programming with FAO, WHO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank, particularly in conditional forms of assistance and the expansion of purchases from farmer organizations.		Country office resilience team - procurement		2022
2.2	Increase efforts to prevent acute and chronic malnutrition in partnership with UNICEF.		Country office nutrition team		2022
2.3	Enhance the partnership with UNFPA aimed at supporting vulnerable young boys and girls, strengthening their ability to manage pregnancies and avoid sexually transmitted diseases.		Country office social protection team		2022
2.4	Support interventions that offer diverse income-generating opportunities for refugees, in collaboration with UNHCR.		Country office purchase for progress and food assistance for assets teams		2022
2.5	Continue to support peacebuilding activities using the model piloted in Tanganyika Province.		Country office programme unit		2021

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
3	Engage more strategically with donors, the Government and cooperating partners.	Strategic	Country office	High	2022
3.1	Build on WFP's central position in the humanitarian aid system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to advocate more donor funding for capacity and resilience building.		Country office senior management		2022
3.2	Strengthen WFP's partnership with the Government, including at the provincial level, through targeted capacity building relevant to policy and strategy formulation and implementation, promoting stronger government leadership and participation where appropriate.		Country office programme unit and field offices		2022
3.3	Develop long-term agreements with selected cooperating partners working in relevant sectors and geographic areas through pre-selection of capable organizations and longer-term partnership agreements.		Country office senior management and procurement and programme units		2022
3.4	When field-level agreements with cooperating partners are signed, organize internal planning sessions at which to agree on activity and payment schedules. WFP should also ensure that the finance teams of cooperating partners receive closer support in expense and financial reporting.		Country office senior management and procurement and programme units		2022

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
4	Strengthen monitoring and evaluation, internal management and control systems for reducing risks to operations by increasing the capability of internal control functions, particularly the systems by which they generate and use information and evidence, and defining common expectations regarding requirements in relation to monitoring coverage, data collection exercises, monitoring frequency and sampling.	Operational	Country office and headquarters Human Resources Division, Corporate Planning and Performance Division and Information Technology Division	High	2021–2023
4.1	Strengthen human resource capacity for the first and second lines of defense by training personnel with responsibility relating to management systems and internal controls and by recruiting additional compliance specialists.		Country office senior management, headquarters Human Resources Division and country office human resources unit		2021

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
4.2	Seek to simplify and better integrate reporting platforms and databases and develop dashboards that provide easier access to information.		Headquarters Corporate Planning and Performance Division and Information Technology Division		2022
4.3	Ensure data integration between the Logistics Execution Support System and the COMET monitoring and evaluation system in order to improve the tracking of performance, identification of gaps and potential remedial measures.		Headquarters Corporate Planning and Performance Division and Information Technology Division		2022
4.4	Task the monitoring and evaluation team with conducting more decentralized evaluations that facilitate the documentation of best practices and help to generate knowledge on strengths and weaknesses in operations and provide it with the necessary resources.		Country office senior management		2023

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
5	Group protection, exclusion risks, environmental protection, conflict sensitivity and accountability to affected populations in a single “risks to populations” framework that gives such risks the same level of attention as risks to operations receive. This could build on ongoing work at headquarters on environmental and social safeguards.	Operational	Country office and headquarters Emergencies and Transitions Unit (Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division)	High	2022
5.1	Create a single risks to population framework that integrates elements of protection, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and inclusiveness at the level of programme delivery, linked to more effective assurance of accountability to affected populations.		Headquarters Emergencies and Transitions Unit (Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division)		2022

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
5.2	Analyse risks to populations prior to the launch of programmes and integrate such risks into post-activity assessments and data systems through a systematic analysis of emerging issues and opportunities arising from implementation.		Country office vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation teams		2022
5.3	Improve targeting and, where necessary, adapt interventions so that the most vulnerable people, including those who are sick or have disabilities, are not excluded from WFP assistance.		Country office vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation teams		2022
5.4	Reduce the environmental footprint of WFP operations and support initiatives that help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve efficient use of water and protect forests and land.		Country office vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation teams and programme unit		2022

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
5.5	Strengthen accountability to affected populations through culturally appropriate communications for affected people on risks and opportunities. Broaden reporting to include qualitative data on gender and conflict sensitivity. Increase communications with beneficiaries on targeting criteria, financial amounts and the modalities and timing of assistance.		Country office monitoring and evaluation teams		2022
6	Increase the focus on gender through greater attention to the concerns of women, men, boys and girls in the more vulnerable population groups and better use of opportunities presented by programming.	Operational	Country office	Medium	2021–2022
6.1	Systematically consider the specific needs of women and girls in each intervention setting.		Country office programme unit, vulnerability analysis and mapping and monitoring and evaluation teams		2022
6.2	Focus on acting on not only the visible aspects of gender inequality but also the underlying social and cultural causes.		Country office programme unit, area and field offices		2021

	Recommendation	Type	Who	Level of priority	When
6.3	To facilitate the activity in recommendation 6.2, strengthen WFP's strategic partnerships with the Ministry of Gender and other United Nations agencies such as UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.		Country office senior management and programme unit		2022
6.4	Make dedicated funding available for gender-specific activities, including in field offices.		Country office senior management, programme and partnerships units		2022

Acronyms

CSP	country strategic plan
COMET	country office management tool
ICSP	interim country strategic plan
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHAS	United Nations Humanitarian Air Service
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization