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## Summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Timor-Leste (2018–2020)

### Executive summary

The evaluation of the country strategic plan for Timor-Leste was conducted between October 2019 and March 2020 and covered WFP strategy, interventions and systems for the period between 2015 and 2019. Taking a utilization-focused, consultative approach, the evaluation served the dual purpose of accountability and learning and informed the preparation of a new country strategic plan for Timor-Leste. The evaluation assessed WFP's strategic positioning, its contribution to outcomes, the efficiency with which the plan was implemented and the factors explaining WFP's performance.

Timor-Leste is a lower-middle-income country. It faces severe malnutrition challenges, with approximately 25 percent of the population considered food-secure. The country's strategic development plan for 2011–2030 guides its development efforts and reflects its commitment to state building, social inclusion and economic growth. However, the conversion of policies into action has been challenged by several years of instability in government.

The country strategic plan intends to continue WFP's shift from the provision of food assistance to policy engagement and capacity strengthening through a focus on improving nutrition for children under 5, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls, and increasing the capacity of national and subnational government institutions to deliver food-, nutrition- and supply chain-related services.

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*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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The evaluation found that the plan was aligned with national policies, plans and strategies for food and nutrition security. However, relevance could have been enhanced by greater attention to complementarity and linkages with interventions of the Government and other development partners.

The country office made useful contributions to expected outcomes, including through social and behaviour change communication and the strengthening of the enabling environment for evidence-based policymaking. It also strengthened supply chains, a central element of the Government's supplementary feeding strategy. However, severe underfunding led to downscaling of activities, and targets for the provision of fortified and specialized nutritious foods were not reached.

The cost-effectiveness of supplementary feeding interventions increased and compared favourably with similar interventions in other countries and regions. Geographic targeting was correct, but targeted supplementary feeding activities experienced pipeline breaks that reduced attendance levels at health facilities, thereby affecting coverage.

Uncertainty regarding resources also resulted in the country office having to sacrifice medium- and long-term planning while frequently adjusting operations. Lack of funding affected the ability to fill strategic positions, and the country office lacked staff of sufficient expertise and seniority to engage at the policy level and to build partnerships.

The evaluation concludes that achieving the major institutional restructuring set out in the WFP Integrated Road Map and the associated shift from implementation to enabling requires a longer period of time than the term of the evaluated country strategic plan. The country office is undergoing a transition during which many of its operational structures, procedures and staffing continue to reflect the conditions of the past. The evaluation identified benefits from increased collaboration between WFP and other United Nations organizations.

The evaluation team's four recommendations include ensuring a threshold of sustainable and predictable funding and strengthening partnerships. Both are essential for the adequate functioning of the country office. Two operational recommendations are focused on building on WFP's thematic strengths and reappraising its approach to capacity strengthening. A commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is mainstreamed through the recommended partnership strategies and thematic approaches.

## **Draft decision\***

The Board takes note of the summary report on the evaluation of the country strategic plan for Timor-Leste (2018–2020) (WFP/EB.2/2020/6-D) and management response (WFP/EB.2/2020/6-D/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.

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\* 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 Timor-Leste country strategic plan (CSP) covers the three-year period from 2018 to 2020. The scope of this CSP evaluation, however, covers 2015 to mid-2019, to take into account previous operations and thus assess strategic and operational continuity. It assesses WFP's strategic positioning and the extent to which WFP made the shift expected under the CSP; WFP's effectiveness in contributing to strategic outcomes; the efficiency with which the CSP was implemented; and factors explaining WFP's performance.
2. The evaluation was timed to inform the design of a second CSP for Timor-Leste, with field work conducted in November and December 2019. It employed mixed methods, drawing on monitoring data, document review and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Particular attention was paid to developing a methodology for the assessment of capacity strengthening, a core objective of the CSP. Attention was also paid to developing a systematic framework for assessing whether WFP engaged in gender-responsive programming. Both primary and secondary data were carefully triangulated to minimize dependence on any single source and ensure the validity of findings.

### Context

3. Having gained independence in 2002, Timor-Leste is one of the world's newest states. Largely as a result of oil revenues, which account for 48 percent of gross domestic product,<sup>1</sup> Timor-Leste is now classified as a lower-middle-income country.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Timor-Leste Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. 2017. *2017 Reconciliation Report*. <https://eiti.org/files/documents/2017.tl-eiti.report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. 2019. Data: Timor-Leste. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/timor-leste>.

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS		
Year	Indicator	Value
2019	Total population	1.4 million
2018	Life expectancy at birth	69.0 years
2018	Gross domestic product per capita (purchasing power parity)	USD 3 154.92 (current USD)
2019	Human Development Index score	0.626
2014	Population living below income poverty line of USD 1.90 a day	30.3%
2014	Income Gini coefficient	28.7
2018	Gender Development Index score	0.899
2013–2018	Wasting – moderate and severe – among children 0–4 (weight for height)	11%
2013–2018	Stunting – moderate and severe – among children 0–4 (height for age)	51%
2013–2018	Overweight – moderate and severe – among children 0–4 (weight for age)	1%

Sources: United Nations Development Programme. 2019. *Human Development Report 2019*. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>; World Bank. World Development Indicators; <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/>; United Nations Children's Fund. The State of the World's Children 2019: Children, food and nutrition, Growing well in a changing world. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children-2019>; United Nations Population Fund. World Population Dashboard. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>.

4. Agriculture, especially subsistence farming, is an important sector for most of the population, and particularly for poor people. However, productivity is low and agriculture accounts for only 17 percent of non-oil gross domestic product.<sup>3</sup> Important gender inequalities persist, gender-based violence is a major concern and harmful social norms have resulted in unequal access to food for women and girls.
5. Timor-Leste faces severe malnutrition challenges (see table 1). It had the third highest rate of undernourishment in the Asia and the Pacific region during the period 2016–2018: 24.9 percent of the total population were undernourished, compared with 11.4 percent for the region as a whole.<sup>4</sup> A 2018 study found that only 25 percent of the population could be considered food-secure.<sup>5</sup>
6. The national strategic development plan for 2011–2030 guides the country's development efforts and reflects its commitment to state building, social inclusion and economic growth. However, the conversion of policies into action has been challenged by several years of instability in government.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2018. Timor-Leste – Systematic Country Diagnostic: Pathways for a New Economy and Sustainable Livelihoods. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/524131528837983427/timor-leste-systematic-country-diagnostic-pathways-for-a-new-economy-and-sustainable-livelihoods>.

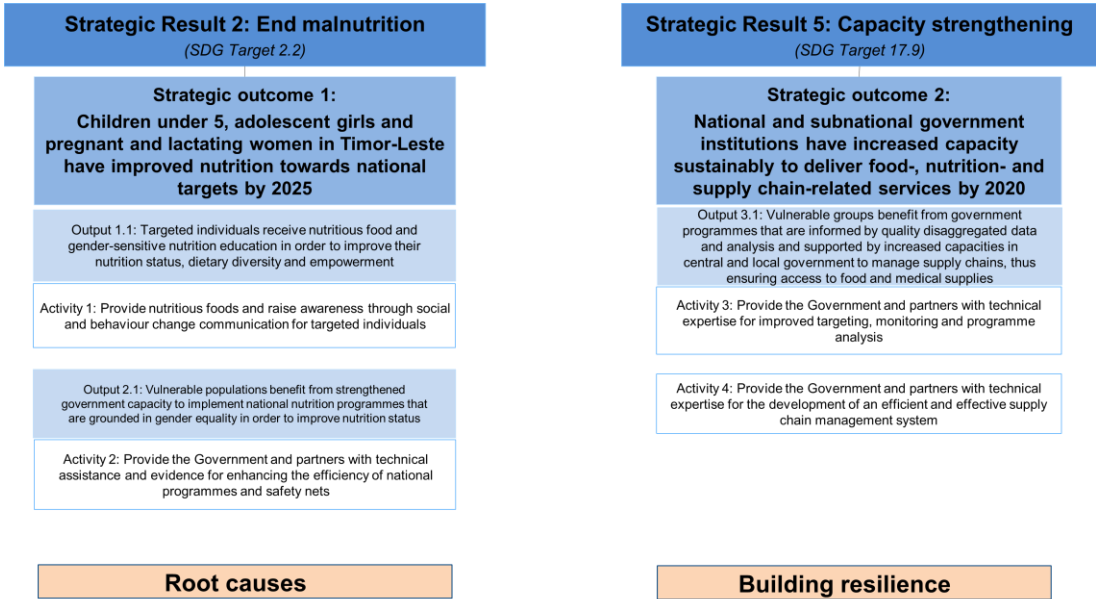
<sup>4</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Children's Fund, WFP and World Health Organization. 2019. *The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2019. Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns*. pp. 125–127. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis 2018–2023. <http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1151924/>.

**The WFP country strategic plan**

- 7. The CSP focuses on two strategic outcomes (see figure 1) with the overall aim of continuing WFP’s shift from the provision of food assistance to policy engagement and capacity strengthening for the Government:
  - a) Children under 5, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women have improved nutrition towards national targets by 2025.
  - b) National and subnational government institutions have increased capacity sustainably to deliver food-, nutrition- and supply chain-related services by 2020.

**Figure 1: Timor-Leste country strategic plan “line of sight”**



Source: WFP, 2017

- 8. According to the needs-based plan the CSP required USD 16.9 million. As of January 2020, however, the CSP was 30 percent funded, at USD 5.1 million. Direct nutrition interventions were more underfunded than capacity strengthening activities. In the absence of donor support, most funding for the CSP (66 percent, or USD 3.3 million) came through allocations from WFP’s Strategic Resource Allocation Committee. Other funding came from private donors (USD 319,000), the Government (USD 210,000), Australia (USD 140,000) and the Republic of Korea (USD 98,000).

## Evaluation findings

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

#### *Relevance to national policies, plans and strategies, and strategic positioning*

9. The CSP was aligned with national policies, plans and strategies regarding food and nutrition security. National policy and strategies committed Timor-Leste to following a multisectoral approach to malnutrition. CSP activities focused largely on selected nutrition-specific elements. The CSP design was appropriately prudent in limiting WFPs direct interventions given the available resources, but relevance could have been enhanced by greater attention to complementarity and links with interventions of the Government and other development partners. While partnerships were recognized as "central", the CSP did not focus on the strategic role of partnerships in leveraging WFP's own efforts.
10. There was therefore a contrast between the broad challenges that the CSP was aimed at addressing and the narrow range of activities that it committed to undertaking. Focus was on the treatment of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) and social and behaviour change communication (SBCC), with limited preventive activities beyond behaviour change and no clear links to nutrition-sensitive interventions. The lack of direct opportunities to promote nutrition for adolescents through school feeding was a constraint although the CSP included other activities that specifically targeted adolescents.

#### *Targeting*

11. For the targeted supplementary feeding programme, the CSP targeted the most vulnerable by focusing on the municipalities with the highest malnutrition rates. However, WFP was not able to achieve full coverage in target areas, and the CSP did not present a clear strategy for reaching the most remote populations.
12. The CSP was designed to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality through elements that were gender-specific, gender-sensitive and gender-transformative. A central feature of the CSP document was its strong focus on improving the nutrition status of all adolescent girls and breaking the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, although this was put into practice only indirectly – through SBCC.

#### *Alignment and coherence with United Nations partnerships*

13. The CSP was aligned with the United Nations development assistance framework for 2015–2020, under which the country office collaborated with other United Nations agencies including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on MAM, developing treatment guidelines, joint training and equipment support, the World Health Organization (WHO) on child and adolescent health, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on coordination of the food security sector. However, the framework did not serve its purpose of providing a platform for United Nations engagement with the Government, the leveraging of agencies' comparative advantages, and its acting as a convener between the Government and donors for the mobilization of resources. During the evaluation period, United Nations agencies largely pursued individual rather than collective fundraising strategies, partly because of frequent changes in the Government, but also because of a lack of mechanisms that provided opportunities for regular dialogue and accountability.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations. 2019. United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2015–2020 in Timor-Leste, Evaluation Report, p. 47.

## What are the extent and quality of WFP's specific contribution to country strategic plan outcomes in Timor-Leste?

### *Delivery of outputs and contribution to outcomes*

14. Strategic outcome 1: Children under 5, adolescent girls and pregnant and lactating women have improved nutrition towards national targets by 2025. The CSP identified two outputs under this outcome:
- Targeted individuals receive nutritious food and gender-sensitive nutrition education in order to improve their nutrition status, dietary diversity and empowerment.
  - Vulnerable populations benefit from strengthened government capacity to implement national nutrition programmes that are grounded in gender equality in order to improve nutrition status.
15. Overall, the CSP did not reach its targets for the provision of fortified and specialized nutritious foods in 2018 and 2019 (see table 2). Both of these elements of the targeted supplementary feeding programme (TSFP) were severely underfunded. Other relatively low-cost output targets under strategic outcome 1, such as those for training and exposure to WFP-supported nutrition messaging, were met or exceeded.

Activity	Output indicator	2018			2019		
		Output	Target	% achieved	Output	Target	% achieved
1	Quantity of fortified food provided ( <i>mt</i> )	110	866	12.7	108	432	25.0
1	Quantity of specialized nutritious foods provided ( <i>mt</i> )	51	144	35.4	5	72	6.9
2	Number of training sessions and workshops organized	8	6	133.3	7	10	70.0
2	Number of counterparts trained in capacity development on mother and child health and nutrition and nutrition activities. Number of government and other national partner staff members receiving technical assistance and training	180	160	112.5	51	58	87.9
2	Number of technical assistance activities undertaken	12	-	-	8	16	50.0
1	Number of men exposed to WFP-supported nutrition messaging. Number of men and boys reached through interpersonal SBCC approaches	5 603	6 000	93.4	6 377	7 200	88.6
1	Number of women exposed to WFP-supported nutrition messaging. Number of women and girls reached through interpersonal SBCC approaches	45 072	18 000	250.4	13 552	16 800	80.7

Sources: Annual country reports for 2018 and 2019.

16. At the outcome level, performance data show challenges in relation to default and recovery rates for MAM treatment and to numbers of children reached. Larger proportions of MAM patients defaulted from both treatment and recovery than planned, which is a common problem arising from the length of time that MAM treatment requires. Coverage of

the target population of children under 5 was much lower than planned and fell in 2019: performance under this indicator was linked to pipeline breaks that resulted in nutrition supplies being unavailable, in turn leading to children not being brought to health facilities. Coverage of pregnant and lactating women, on the other hand, was above target levels, with significant improvements in 2019.

17. Strategic outcome 2: National and subnational government institutions have increased capacity sustainably to deliver food-, nutrition- and supply chain-related services by 2020. There was one output under this outcome:
  - a) Vulnerable groups benefit from government programmes that are informed by quality disaggregated data and analysis and supported by increased capacities in central and local government to manage supply chains, thus ensuring access to food and medical supplies.
18. Output data were focused on training events and the provision of technical assistance and performance, and the indicators reported varied greatly (see table 3). Some targets were surpassed by 50 percent, while other indicators were at only 25 percent of target values. Most indicators do not specify the types of training or capacities that were strengthened.

**TABLE 3: COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN OUTPUT DATA: STRATEGIC OUTCOME 2, 2018 AND 2019**

Activity	Output indicator	2018			2019		
		Output	Target	% achieved	Output	Target	% achieved
3	Number of training sessions and workshops organized	8	4	200.0	2	4	50.0
3	Number of government and other national partner staff members receiving technical assistance and training	178	100	178.0	55	80	68.7
3	Number of technical assistance activities provided	4	6	66.7	7	8	87.5
4	Number of training sessions and workshops organized	3	12	25.0	15	20	75.0
4	Number of government and other national partner staff members receiving technical assistance and training	73	-	-	115	165	69.7
4	Number of technical assistance activities provided	10	12	83.3	6	8	75.0

Sources: Annual country reports for 2018 and 2019.

19. Despite recent revisions of WFP's Corporate Results Framework (2017–2021) there were no meaningful indicators for measuring achievement of this outcome at this stage. However, the evaluation assessed that CSP implementation made useful contributions to capacity strengthening relevant to supportive law, strategies and procedures, well-functioning organizations and educated and skilled people.
20. Successful advocacy of government funding for nutrition supplies was an unplanned achievement and highlights the Government's commitment to strategic outcome 1. Other examples of success included a rice fortification pilot study that led to the formation of a technical working group under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. WFP also provided support for the drafting of a law on food fortification, which awaits approval. In addition, the Government expressed interest in the integration of rice fortification into the school feeding programme.



21. A “Fill the Nutrient Gap” analysis carried out in 2019 was acknowledged by all national stakeholders as an important achievement in building awareness of core nutrition issues. Those foundations will be built on in the future, but the study has already been used to inform the United Nations 2019 common country analysis and is expected to inform a new national nutrition strategy. Results are being used to review the school feeding menu. Development partners referred to the advocacy value of the study’s cost of diet analysis in showing that household incomes are too low to support nutritious diets, but there were also comments to the effect that the Fill the Nutrient Gap model is complex and difficult to explain.
22. WFP made an important contribution in strengthening the supply chain for medical supplies at the central level through improvements to systems and procedures. However, WFP underestimated the scale of the organizational capacity strengthening required in terms of the depth, quality and duration of the structural and procedural changes needed and the range of skills that WFP staff required.
23. WFP made substantial efforts to train government staff during CSP implementation in 2018 and 2019, but contributions to capacity strengthening at the individual level have so far been incremental rather than transformative.

#### ***Gender equality and women’s empowerment***

24. During CSP implementation, WFP made notable progress in generating evidence of and advocating attention to the nutrition needs of adolescent girls, creating an opportunity for SBCC messages that tackle harmful gender norms in intra-household food distribution. However, more women than men were reached by WFP-supported nutrition messages, suggesting that there is a need to reach more men and boys with gender-sensitive nutrition messages that tackle harmful gender norms.

#### ***Sustainability***

25. The Government of Timor-Leste has the financial resources to sustain strategies and programmes supported by the CSP. The national budget for 2019 was larger than that for 2018. Excluding funds from development partners, most of the budget is funded from the country’s Petroleum Fund, which had a balance of USD 15.8 billion in 2019.
26. In addition, national level programmes supported by the CSP represent a small share of the government budget. For example, the total allocation for the Ministry of Health in 2020, including support for WFP’s targeted supplementary feeding programme (TSFP), is set at USD 59.6 million in the 2020 budget, but recent analysis suggests that nutrition policies and plans endorsed by successive governments were insufficiently funded and relied on donor funding to fill deficits. The 2019 budget was heavily weighted towards investments in public infrastructure, while the health, agriculture and education sectors together accounted for just 12 percent of state budget expenditures.
27. In terms of technical capacity, there are practical challenges to a sustainable handover of TSFP coordination from WFP to the Ministry of Health. Despite the theoretical availability of funding, the resources actually provided for the TSFP were insufficient. WFP contributions to capacity strengthening are at an early stage and field observations suggest that facilities struggled with the distribution of supplies in the field and with reductions in the amount and continuity of supplies delivered.

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

***Delivery of outputs within the intended timeframe and coverage***

28. WFP experienced delays and pipeline breaks in its supplementary feeding activities as a result of funding challenges. Delays were generally protracted, lasting from 3 to 10 months. Pipeline breaks affected procurement and food deliveries, which in turn affected attendance levels at health facilities. The TSFP had a total of 72,000 target beneficiaries; only 13,660 of the 48,100 beneficiaries targeted in 2018 were reached, but in 2019 the annual target of 24,050 was surpassed, with 26,321 beneficiaries reached. Lack of resources also affected the coverage of municipalities, and only 6 municipalities of the planned 13 were reached. Limited coverage of WFP-supported MAM treatment also led to an imbalance with the nationwide support for severe acute malnutrition treatment provided by UNICEF. While the geographic targeting of municipalities was correct, the coverage was considered insufficient for achieving the desired sustainable effects on malnutrition indicators.

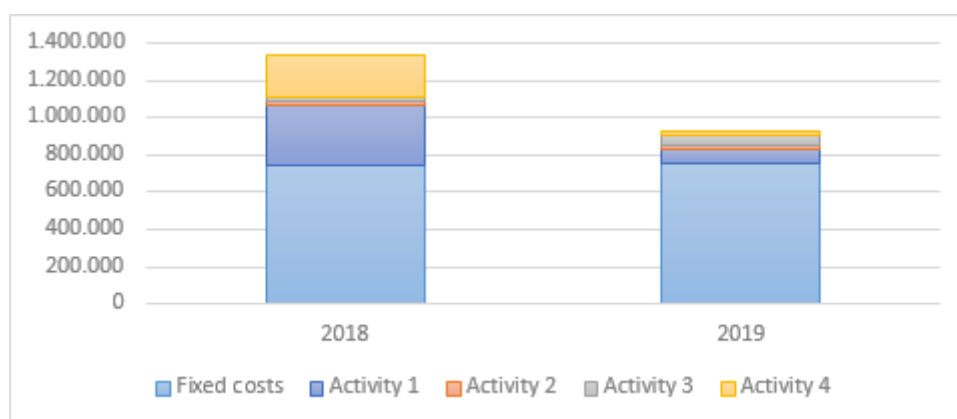
***Cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency***

29. The cost-effectiveness of the TSFP increased during CSP implementation and compared favourably with that of similar interventions in other countries and regions. The average cost per recovered beneficiary was significantly lower under the CSP than under the previous development operation, for both beneficiary groups: for recovered children under 5 the average cost declined from USD 52.3 to USD 22.9 and for recovered pregnant and lactating women from USD 41.7 to USD 16.2.
30. The country office considered cost-efficiency in its staffing decisions and increased the use of volunteers from the United Nations and the Korea International Cooperation Agency and interns from the United Nations and the National University of Timor-Leste. However, the country office's heavy dependence on such low-cost staffing solutions did not necessarily enhance the cost-efficiency of CSP implementation given the need for staff with sufficient expertise for engagement at the policy level and for building partnerships.

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

***Mobilization of adequate, predictable and flexible resources***

31. The uncertainty of resource allocations resulted in the country office having to sacrifice medium- and long-term planning while frequently adjusting operations to available funds. Throughout most of 2019, the office experienced severe liquidity constraints and was able to operate only because it received advances from headquarters. Towards the end of 2019, contributions increased significantly with large transfers from the Strategic Resource Allocation Committee and two grants from China and Japan.
32. Budget analysis suggests that there is a critical point below which it becomes difficult for the country office to continue the implementation of the CSP. Figure 2 presents the country office's actual spending on fixed costs (defined as staff and direct support costs, adjusted for staff costs) and shows the balance for implementation of each activity. In 2018 the country office was able to implement some capital-intensive activities. In 2019, very little money was available for any activities and CSP implementation was severely constrained, with implications for WFP's presence and visibility at the operational level.

**Figure 2: Timor-Leste country strategic plan: analysis of fixed versus free costs (USD)**

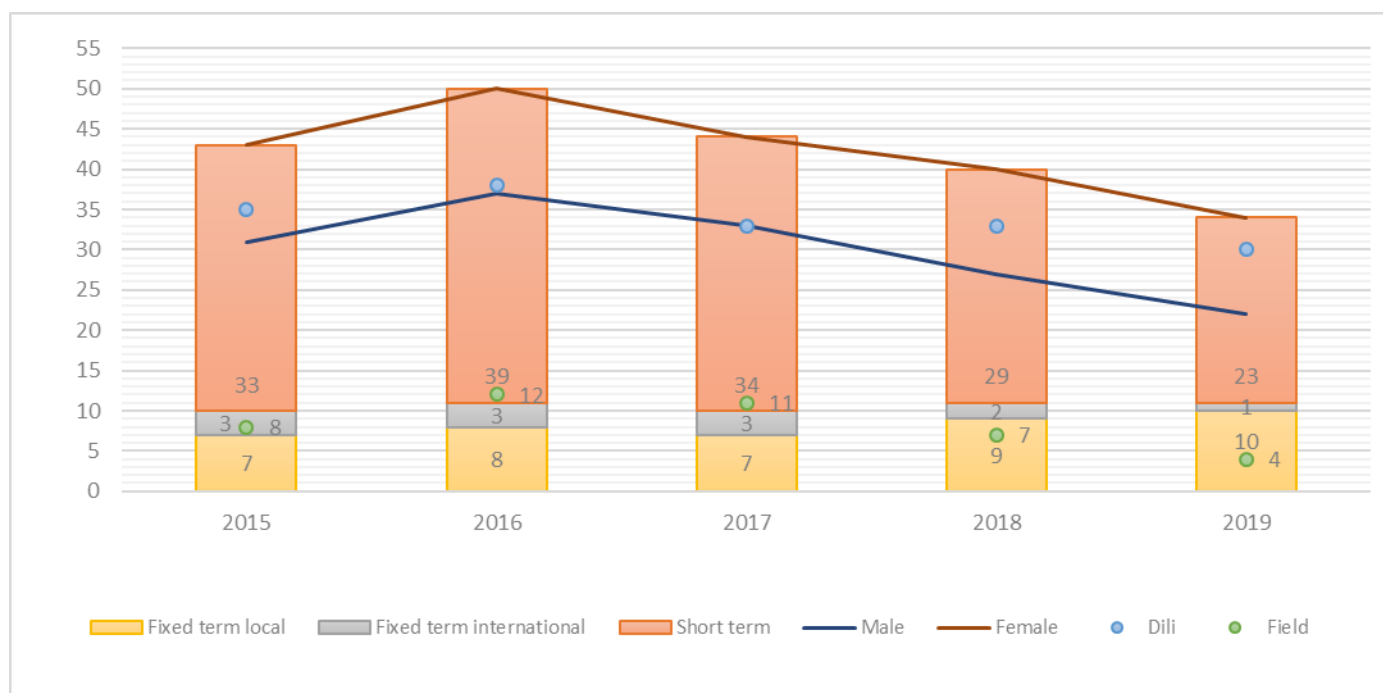
Source: Country portfolio budget planned versus actual report, WINGS.

### **Partnerships and collaboration**

33. The central partnerships were those with policy and governance partners: ministries and other agencies of the Government. Efforts to build such partnerships were a major undertaking for the small country office. When signed agreements are in place, the nature and value of the work undertaken depend on numerous factors, notably the availability of funding and the human resource capacity of WFP and the partner ministry or agency in the planning and management of joint activities.
34. A number of potential partners on gender equality and women's empowerment were identified through a mapping exercise but with limited practical results. The country office also developed a proposal for working jointly with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and UNICEF on the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative on combatting gender-based violence. However, WFP was not selected as a recipient of funding because donors did not see its comparative advantage in the field of gender equality and the empowerment of women.
35. During CSP implementation, South-South cooperation and study tours were a key feature of WFP's strategy for strengthening the capacity of the Government. Representatives from several ministries visited Cambodia, China and India to exchange experiences and good practices in areas such as food security policy, school feeding, rice fortification and early warning systems. However, it is too early to assess the extent to which participants shared or applied the knowledge that they acquired.

### **Human resources and staff expertise**

36. The country office organigram was reviewed and adjusted in the early stages of CSP implementation with a view to clarifying reporting lines, identifying and reclassifying core positions, merging administrative units and abolishing some positions. Reductions in overall staff numbers were driven mainly by operational field needs. While lack of funding did not significantly affect staff numbers, it influenced the ability of WFP to fill strategic positions – in particular, the country office lacked staff with the necessary expertise and seniority for engagement at the policy level and for building partnerships. The country office also faced rapid staff turnover, and most personnel served under short-term contracts. This inevitably detracted from the consistency of performance and reduced institutional memory (see figure 3).

**Figure 3: Timor-Leste country office staff members by contract length, gender and location**

Source: country office data.

### Results-based management

37. The use of monitoring data for results-based management was strong in WFP's direct engagement in the TSFP but limited in other areas. Until late 2019 WFP collected data that tracked beneficiary numbers and food stocks in each facility, and monitoring data allowed the forecasting of distribution needs, the estimation of beneficiary numbers and other similar activities. Beginning in 2018, all other CSP activities focused on capacity strengthening, essentially sharing the same three indicators for the output level, which measured the number of training events, activities and participants. The indicators did not provide information on the nature of activities or on whether participants learned anything and were satisfied with the results. Changes introduced in 2019 will provide additional information, but some indicators are still very generic, making the demonstration of links between outputs and outcomes in results chains somewhat weak.

### Conclusions

38. Achievement of the major institutional restructuring set out in the Integrated Road Map and the associated shift from implementation to enabling of programmes requires time. The challenge is in sustaining and directing the necessary efforts for sufficiently long periods. The period covered by this evaluation covered the first steps of what will be a long process.
39. In Timor-Leste, WFP continued its shift from a largely humanitarian role to one that spans the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and from implementation to advice and capacity strengthening. The country office is undergoing a transition during which many of its operational structures, procedures, staffing and skills continue to reflect the conditions of the past and new monitoring systems and guidelines on, for example, capacity strengthening and gender issues, have not been fully adopted. This has heightened the challenges facing the country office in CSP implementation, despite the efforts of its committed and hardworking personnel.

40. The CSP represented both a significant innovation and an evolution of previous WFP strategy. It was innovative in introducing a new structure for the planning and management of WFP's work, with consequent administrative, funding and human resource challenges. Those challenges could also be seen as opportunities for working more efficiently and transparently, both within WFP and in its relations with donors, the Government and development partners. Limited resources have restricted the extent to which such opportunities could be exploited, although there have been some administrative benefits. As the transition continues into the next CSP cycle, there is scope for a more fundamental reappraisal of WFP's country presence in Timor-Leste.
41. Food and nutrition insecurity in Timor-Leste have been persistent over the last decade. The focus of the CSP during the evaluation period was relevant to country priorities and people's needs and built on WFP's strengths and experience in aspects of nutrition and logistics. However, some fundamental assumptions underpinning the design of the CSP and related to the readiness of the Government to fund and take over WFP workstreams did not hold true, partly because of changes in the national government. In addition, the focus on a few selected elements of a multisectoral food security and nutrition approach, without full specification of the roles of partners and of how WFP contributions were linked to them, led to a contrast between the broad challenges that WFP sought to address and the narrow scope of its contributions.
42. Severe underfunding has had a dominant influence on performance of the Timor-Leste CSP to date and has had impacts on several levels. Efforts were scaled down and not all targets were met, but the country office made useful contributions to outcomes such as SBCC and to capacity strengthening through studies and advocacy. It also helped strengthen supply chains, a central element of the Government's supplementary feeding strategy. While recognizing that capacity strengthening requires time, there are challenges to achievement of the required sustainable organizational and individual capacity in government agencies.
43. The geographic targeting of nutrition interventions was appropriate. Targeted supplementary feeding was more cost-effective under the CSP than previously and results compared well with those of similar interventions in other countries. However, lack of an adequate and regular flow of funding caused pipeline breaks that reduced the achievement of nutrition objectives and decreased coverage.
44. Adequate staffing and effective partnership building are critical factors for success, but both were constrained by a lack of financial resources. This limited the appointment of senior staff, which in turn constrained the country office's capacity for advocacy at the policy level. A lack of resources also meant that not all partnership commitments made by the Government and the country office resulted in practical action. As a result, while the country office recognized the importance of partnerships it could not exploit their full potential.
45. Despite positive steps taken by WFP to address the specific needs of women and girls, more could be done (in partnership with the Government and other United Nations agencies) to fully achieve gender-transformative results and nutrition outcomes for women and girls and to build on progress in highlighting the nutrition needs of adolescent girls.
46. The evaluation identified real benefits from collaboration between WFP and other United Nations agencies and it is in WFP's interest to strengthen these joint efforts as multisectoral, multi-stakeholder approaches become more necessary for the achievement of food and nutrition security goals. The United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework (UNSDCF) potentially provides a new framework for achieving this.

## Lessons

47. The evaluation notes a number of lessons that may be applicable in similar settings.
48. WFP should not underestimate the capacity strengthening challenges that it faces in lower-middle-income countries, especially at the local level in countries where governance is decentralized. Handover to a host government should be carefully assessed and carried out in a manner that avoids abrupt interruptions. WFP's profile, reputation and resources are stronger when it is engaged in implementation work at scale. This gives it greater credibility and acceptance among stakeholders as it shifts towards other roles and facilitates the resourcing of activities such as capacity strengthening.
49. The assumption that implementation could begin promptly after approval of the CSP proved to be unrealistic, and the possibility of such delay should be considered when designing a CSP. A fundamental challenge to timely implementation of the CSP was the process of agreeing with relevant ministries exactly what support WFP would provide and the setting up of the necessary institutional arrangements with the host government.

## Recommendations

50. Two of the recommendations arising from the evaluation are strategic in nature. They identify ways in which WFP can make effective contributions in Timor-Leste through its small country office with adequate and predictable funding and proactive work in partnership with the Government and – through the UNSDCF – other United Nations agencies. Two operational recommendations have the aim of focusing WFP's contributions on areas where it can build on its established thematic strengths and on reinforcing the approach and methods that it uses to strengthen the capacity of its national partners. A commitment to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is mainstreamed through the recommended partnership strategies and thematic approaches. In combination, the four recommendations envision a clearly focused, stable, synergetic and effective WFP contribution in Timor-Leste throughout the next CSP cycle.

**Recommendations**

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Level of prioritization</b>	<b>When</b>
1.	For WFP to remain relevant and effective in Timor-Leste, headquarters should ensure a threshold of sustainable and predictable funding that guarantees a stable minimum core team in the country office. The team should be configured to engage in high-level policy dialogue and advocacy with the Government and other partners and to focus on leveraging domestic and international resources. Additional technical expertise and support services should be mobilized for specific initiatives once non-core funding is secured.	Strategic	Headquarters – Assistant Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, Resource Management Department; Corporate Finance Division	High	December 2021
2.	<p>The country office should work to strengthen CSP implementation through partnerships, focusing on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ WFP should build a closer, more focused relationship with the Government that benefits from stronger strategic interaction and a revised understanding of capacity strengthening and handover opportunities. Its core partners should be the Ministry of Health, the Autonomous Drug and Medical Equipment Service, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.</li> <li>➤ WFP should work for stronger integration of its programming with that of other United Nations agencies under the UNSDCF, specifically with UNICEF on working with the Government to build and implement a multisectoral nutrition strategy and on further gender-sensitive work on MAM and related SBCC; with WHO and UNFPA on gender-sensitive support for school feeding (including adolescent health) and nutrition and food safety; and with FAO on the ongoing coordination of the food security and nutrition sector throughout the Government.</li> </ul>	Strategic	Country office, supported by the regional bureau and headquarters – Partnerships and Advocacy Department; Programme – Humanitarian and Development Division, reflecting agreement on coordination among United Nations agencies	High	Mid-2021

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Level of prioritization</b>	<b>When</b>
3.	<p>The country office should ensure focused technical advisory and capacity strengthening contributions in Timor-Leste that build on established WFP strengths and contribute effectively through broader sectoral and partnership frameworks in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ selected, focused elements of a multisectoral, gender-sensitive nutrition strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the strengthening of SBCC and other nutrition services at the field level (including within the integrated community health services system), with support for capacity strengthening and links to community outreach in other sectors such as agriculture and social protection;</li> <li>– supply chain and related logistics for the distribution of supplementary feeding commodities;</li> <li>– treatment of MAM, possibly through a new integrated protocol for MAM and severe acute malnutrition, starting with collaboration with UNICEF on the proposed operational research study;</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ vulnerability analysis and mapping: building on recent initiatives, developing full vulnerability analysis and mapping and associated capacity strengthening services for Timor-Leste through a small dedicated unit in the country office supported by other WFP vulnerability analysis and mapping capacity in the region and linked to appropriate technical inputs for national food security monitoring and emergency preparedness and response systems;</li> <li>➤ school feeding: developing a strong advisory support role and associated capacity strengthening services with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, with particular emphasis (aimed at maximizing benefits for gender equality and the empowerment of women) on food and nutrition standards; home-grown school feeding and its links to the development of food systems; supply chain and related logistics issues; the appropriate use of fortified commodities produced in Timor-Leste; school health, including for adolescents, with special attention to gender dimensions; support for monitoring and data management; and prioritization of school feeding in national budget allocations; and</li> </ul>	Operational	Country office, supported by the regional bureau	Medium	Mid-2021



	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Level of prioritization</b>	<b>When</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ specific focused elements of food systems development: food fortification, food safety standards and regulation (in collaboration with WHO) and farm-to-market links for supplementary and school feeding, promoting opportunities and benefits for women in food systems.</li> </ul>				
4.	<p>The country office should reappraise and reinforce WFP's approach to and methods for capacity strengthening for relevant government and civil society agencies that supports achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The country office should undertake comprehensive capacity assessments as part of the design of the new CSP.</li> <li>➤ To ensure the strategic management of capacity strengthening activities and sustainable outcomes WFP should define an appropriate monitoring framework in consultation with the Government and civil society organizations. In doing so, the country office should use relevant indicators from the corporate results framework and additional indicators (including those related to gender issues) agreed with counterparts. In consultation with beneficiary organizations, the country office should ensure that capacity strengthening work is carefully monitored and thoroughly implemented at the local and national levels.</li> </ul>	Operational	Country office supported by regional bureau and headquarters: Technical Assistance and Country Capacity Strengthening Service	High	Mid-2021

## Acronyms

CSP	country strategic plan
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
MAM	moderate acute malnutrition
SBCC	social and behaviour change communication
TSFP	targeted supplementary feeding programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations sustainable development cooperation framework
WHO	World Health Organization