
ANNEX VIII: LESSONS LEARNED FROM EVALUATIONS IN 2020

1. Eight centrally managed evaluations¹ were completed in 2020 and presented to the Executive Board for consideration: an evaluation of the WFP Gender Policy (2015–2020), a strategic evaluation of funding WFP's work, evaluations of the country strategic plans (CSPs) for Bangladesh, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia and Timor-Leste, and a synthesis of lessons and evidence from policy evaluations. An inter-agency humanitarian agency evaluation (IAHE) of the inter-agency humanitarian response to Cyclone Idai² and a thematic IAHE on gender equality³ were also completed, providing a rich evidence base on which WFP can draw lessons.
2. The five CSPs evaluated fall broadly into two groups: those in countries where WFP is shifting to an enabling role with an emphasis on capacity strengthening and policy advocacy for emergency preparedness, social protection, nutrition and supply chain services – Indonesia, Timor-Leste and, to a lesser extent, Cameroon; and those in countries where direct delivery in complex crisis contexts is dominant – Bangladesh and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
3. Evaluations of these first-generation CSPs found that the new framework proved to be an effective platform for strengthening support for governments, all five CSP evaluations in 2020 noting a high degree of alignment with national policies. Country capacity strengthening across the five CSPs was uneven and considerable effort is required to achieve sustainable transitions towards national ownership of WFP-supported programmes. While WFP played a key role in advancing the coordination of food security analysis systems in Cameroon, prospects for scale-up and sustainability were limited. Owing to resource constraints, plans for strengthening government capacity in emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were limited to training for government staff. Indonesia and Timor-Leste country offices focused on capacity strengthening at the individual level but incremental rather than transformative changes were noted. Technical assistance for the Government of Bangladesh consisted primarily of training and exposure visits rather than broader engagement in policy in areas related to WFP's mandate.
4. All five CSP evaluations noted WFP's engagement with a range of government ministries and the need to work more strategically across ministries. WFP has sustained strong leadership in the food security, logistics and emergency telecommunication sectors in countries with emergency responses (Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo), but has yet to use its convening power in humanitarian response to forge the strategic linkages needed to pursue resilience-related or development work at the national level. This gap was related to staff turnover, the limited skills of WFP staff in engaging in policy discourse and strategic communication, and funding constraints.
5. The degree of national and local ownership of WFP-supported programmes varied in the five CSP evaluation countries. In Indonesia and Timor-Leste, the focus on enabling of government activities depends largely on ministerial budget allocations at the national and subnational levels. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, local exit strategies for a move from unconditional to conditional forms of assistance were often not clearly articulated, with

¹ Summary reports of which are available as, respectively, documents WFP/EB.A/2020/7-B; WFP/EB.A/2020/7-C; WFP/EB.1/2021/6-A; WFP/EB.2/2020/6-A; WFP/EB.2/2020/6-B/Rev.1; WFP/EB.2/2020/6-C; WFP/EB.2/2020/6-D; and WFP/EB.A/2020/7-D.

² Report available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluations/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation-response-cyclone-idai>.

³ Report available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluations/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation-iahe-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-and-girls-geewg>.

limited support offered to individuals moving from emergency to resilience phases. WFP worked to forge linkages between emergency response and longer-term resilience in Bangladesh but was criticized for slow progress towards the use of cash-based transfers (CBTs) for refugee communities.

6. The scale, speed and coverage of WFP's response to the Rohingya refugee crisis was commended, and programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo showed considerable expansion in response to a growing number of crises in extremely challenging physical, social and institutional environments. WFP was actively involved in the inter-agency response to Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, assisting the estimated 1.85 million people affected.
7. Inconsistent application of targeting criteria in Cameroon led to data errors regarding CBT beneficiaries, while in the Democratic Republic of the Congo targeting challenges related to the variable capacities of cooperating partners. Individuals with disabilities tended to be excluded from resilience building activities in particular. Whereas the approach to increasing the scale and coverage of interventions in Bangladesh was considered successful, the CSP in Timor-Leste did not have a clear strategy for reaching the most remote communities. Limited use of anticipatory triggers and involvement of civil society organizations in community-based preparedness in Mozambique was a challenge to the effectiveness of the response to Cyclone Idai.
8. Despite improvements, addressing protection issues still presents challenges for WFP. In Cameroon, beneficiary protection concerns in refugee camps were systematically reported to UNHCR, but in the Democratic Republic of the Congo feedback and complaints were not systematically followed up on or addressed in a timely manner. In Bangladesh, the extent to which affected populations, especially women, felt empowered to use the feedback mechanisms was unclear.
9. The IAHE on the Cyclone Idai response reported that the vast majority of people in affected communities thought that they had been treated with respect by humanitarian agencies, although only a small portion knew what assistance would be provided or how to use the complaints and feedback system. The IAHE on gender equality found that women and girls had less access to complaints and feedback mechanisms than men, while the evaluation of the gender policy found that WFP has made moderate progress towards ensuring that food assistance does no harm to the safety, dignity or integrity of the women, men, girls and boys it serves, with the majority of women and men reporting having access to WFP assistance without protection challenges.
10. Funding for WFP's work has increased dramatically in recent years, with a high proportion linked to Level 3 emergencies, but a substantial funding gap remains. As noted in the strategic evaluation report, WFP funding is heavily reliant on a few government donors which provide largely earmarked contributions, with a substantial portion to be spent in one year or less. The Cameroon country office was challenged in developing a multi-year funding approach while working with a one-year funding cycle. In Indonesia, donor earmarking increased compared with the period prior to the interim CSP, limiting WFP's flexibility and ability to respond quickly to needs. The earmarking of most donor contributions in Bangladesh resulted in underfunding of certain activities and constrained the country office's ability to make the strategic shift envisaged in the CSP. Uncertainty of resource allocations in Timor-Leste resulted in sustained short-term planning.

11. WFP's success in raising humanitarian funds has masked the uncertainty of its funding sources, with gaps disproportionately affecting WFP operations in countries not facing a Level 3 emergency and in resilience-building and development activities. Country capacity strengthening efforts in Cameroon, Indonesia and Timor-Leste were hindered by the absence of predictable, longer-term funding.
12. Recent evaluations have focused on or included an analysis of gender equality and women's empowerment, with evidence emerging on the importance of contextual analyses, gender expertise, sex-disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming.
13. The evaluation of the WFP Gender Policy (2015–2020) recommended that the policy be updated so as to firmly embed gender in WFP's work at the country level and contribute to United Nations system efforts to accelerate support for government partners in their efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. This requires continued attention from WFP leadership, building effective country programmes and creating a positive enabling environment for gender mainstreaming that is underpinned by increased financial and human resources for sustainable work on strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment at all levels of the organization.
14. The evaluation of the gender policy found that WFP was missing opportunities to ground the design and development of programmes in a comprehensive contextual analysis of the needs and interests of women, men, girls and boys, which was corroborated by the CSP evaluations: the Bangladesh CSP evaluation noted a high level of awareness of and commitment to gender equality but a lack of more nuanced understanding of how women obtain access to and engage with WFP interventions and how this relates to intrahousehold and social roles. The Indonesia country office had integrated gender considerations into its country capacity strengthening activities but not comprehensively into the CSP. Addressing gender inequality and gender-based violence is fundamental to addressing food insecurity and malnutrition, but in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the interim CSP was not grounded in comprehensive gender analysis. In Cameroon, understanding of the context of gender issues and their implications for WFP programming was scattered. The IAHE on gender equality found that it is often deprioritized in the first phase of a response as it is not considered a "life-saving issue", other than in responding to sexual exploitation and abuse or cases of gender-based violence.
15. The evaluation of the gender policy found that WFP needs to properly resource and support its gender architecture by building the capacities of employees at all levels, particularly senior managers. Understaffing of the gender and inclusion unit and weak accountability lines were major limiting factors for the operationalization of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Bangladesh CSP.
16. Despite improvements in the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data, not all WFP programmes are informed by such data. The gender policy evaluation found weak reporting on key cross-cutting indicators (e.g., "type of transfer by sex and age"), limited collection of data on the individual level and limited qualitative analyses of gender equality and women's empowerment or of intrahousehold dynamics. While application of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender with Age Marker has contributed to CSP design, the process has often been accountability-focused rather than a driver of dynamic gender mainstreaming. The focus on the collection of gender-sensitive data in Cameroon was notable, but the operationalization of gender mainstreaming criteria remained a challenge. The Indonesia CSP does not include gender-specific indicators but effort was made to include sex-disaggregated data on government data collection platforms. There was limited evidence of systematic monitoring and reporting on gender issues in the Bangladesh CSP.

17. Positive efforts to mainstream gender throughout WFP's organizational functions were found to have contributed to a more conducive enabling environment for gender equality and women's empowerment at WFP. However, attention to gender equality and women's empowerment is variable and dependent on individual decision making.
18. First-generation CSPs showed a mixed picture, with slow overall progress towards gender-transformative objectives in Cameroon, better integration of gender considerations in resilience activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and small-scale efforts to integrate gender considerations into activities in Indonesia. The gender policy evaluation recommended that gender mainstreaming be incorporated into the next WFP strategic plan as a core part of WFP's enabling role in zero hunger, and that gender be mainstreamed into the design and implementation of second-generation CSPs.