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**Executive Board
Second Regular Session**

Rome, 14–17 November 2011

EVALUATION REPORTS

Agenda item 6

For consideration

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Distribution: GENERAL
WFP/EB.2/2011/6-E
4 October 2011
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT – YEMEN COUNTRY PORTFOLIO

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted to the Executive Board for consideration

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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* Office of Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East and one of the poorest in the world, with high rates of malnutrition, poverty and food insecurity, high levels of inequality and significant gender disparities. Since 2006, internal conflict has affected the northern governorates of Sa'adah and Al Jawf. In 2007 and 2008, serious floods disrupted economic activity in the eastern governorates of Hadramaut and Al-Mahra, and in 2008, the global food, fuel and financial crises led to a dramatic increase in food prices. Refugees, mainly from Somalia, are arriving in greater numbers every month, and Al-Hirak separatists continue their insurrection in southern provinces.

This report presents the findings of the Yemen country portfolio evaluation, implemented from 31 January to 13 March 2011. The evaluation covers the 12 WFP operations active in Yemen between 2006 and 2010, of which 4 are still ongoing. During the period under evaluation (2006-2010), WFP's food assistance increased significantly and the overall focus of the portfolio shifted towards humanitarian relief and emergency response, with total expenditures growing from US\$7.5 million in 2006 to US\$38.8 million in 2010.

The evaluation focused on three main areas: i) the portfolio's strategic alignment with the needs of people in Yemen, the policies and priorities of the Government of Yemen, WFP's Strategic Objectives, and the objectives of other multilateral and bilateral agencies and donors; ii) the main factors behind the strategic choices made; and iii) the performance and results of the portfolio.

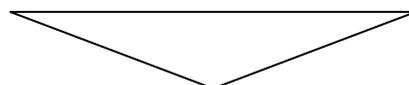
The evaluation findings are generally quite positive and note areas where WFP's portfolio has been well aligned with the priorities of the United Nations country team, government stakeholders and development/humanitarian partners in Yemen. The evaluation observed that WFP has provided significant leadership in the Consolidated Appeals Process for humanitarian funding in Yemen.

The most important factors affecting the strategic choices made during the portfolio period were the availability of funding, the urgency of emergency situations, and the use of data and evidence. The funding environment had a major effect on the choice of operations. Given major donors' prioritization of shorter-term humanitarian emergencies, WFP has pursued emergency funding, in line with its corporate mandate. However, government strategies are prioritizing development solutions for chronic issues such as malnutrition and food insecurity. For these areas WFP has had to work carefully within short-term programming modalities to address long-term or chronic challenges.

The portfolio performed well against criteria for relevance and efficiency, with much of the portfolio very responsive to the humanitarian needs in the country. Against criteria for effectiveness and impact, the evaluation found positive evidence of short-term outcomes and key life-saving operations. However, the country programmes' contribution to overall objectives in education and nutrition has been more limited; significant underfunding has mitigated their effectiveness.

The evaluation provides seven recommendations, most of which focus upon balancing the portfolio between humanitarian and development objectives and exploring new cooperation and partnership opportunities.

DRAFT DECISION*



The Board takes note of “Summary Evaluation Report — Yemen Country Portfolio” (WFP/EB.2/2011/6-E) and the management response (WFP/EB.2/2011/6-E/Add.1) and encourages further action on the recommendations, taking into account 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. This report presents the findings of the Yemen country portfolio evaluation (CPE), implemented from 31 January to 13 March 2011. The CPE covers the 12 WFP operations active in Yemen between 2006 and 2010, four of which are still ongoing. This evaluation period was chosen to cover the portfolio's transition from a concentration on development – education and nutrition – to a focus on humanitarian responses to shocks and crises. The evaluation was timed to ensure that the report would inform both the preparation of a new country programme (CP) and the WFP country strategy process in Yemen.
2. The evaluation focused on three main areas: i) the portfolio's strategic alignment with the needs of people in Yemen, the policies and priorities of the Government of Yemen, WFP's Strategic Objectives, and the objectives of other multilateral and bilateral agencies and donors; ii) the main factors behind the strategic choices made; and iii) the performance and results of the portfolio.

Context

3. With a human development index rank of 133 in 2010, Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East and one of the poorest in the world, in spite of petroleum reserves, which have provided the majority of government revenues for many years. These revenues are declining as oil supplies dwindle, and little has arisen in Yemen's economy to replace them. Although gross domestic product (GDP) has grown over the past decade, this growth slowed during the evaluation period, and a series of crises has created difficult conditions for the country's people and economy. Since 2006, a series of wars has affected the northern governorates of Sa'adah and Al Jawf, as Al-Houthi rebels combat government forces for control of what was once a relatively rich agricultural area. In 2007 and 2008, serious floods disrupted economic activity in the eastern governorates of Hadramaut and Al-Mahra, and in 2008, the global food, fuel and financial crisis led to a dramatic increase in food prices in Yemen, which imports up to 85 percent of its consumption needs. Refugees, mainly from Somalia, are arriving in greater numbers every month, and Al-Hirak separatists continue their insurrection in southern provinces.
4. Yemen has one of the highest child malnutrition rates in the world,¹ and the highest infant and child mortality in the region.² Poor access to safe water and improved sanitation are contributing factors to malnutrition, morbidity and mortality rates. In the particularly onerous context of rural Yemen – which is isolated, arid and poor, with few if any government services available – the impact of hunger is rapidly manifested as malnutrition among more vulnerable members of the community.
5. In 2006, total public expenditure on social services declined to 7 percent of GDP, excluding fuel subsidies, as evidenced in the poor progress against poverty indicators. Nationally, more than 40 percent of the population lives under the poverty line, with recent projected increases in poverty rates due to the food, fuel and financial crises of 2008/09.³ There are significant equity issues regarding poverty; rural areas – where more than

¹ Yemen Comprehensive Food Security Survey. 2010.

² Data available from www.childinfo.org.

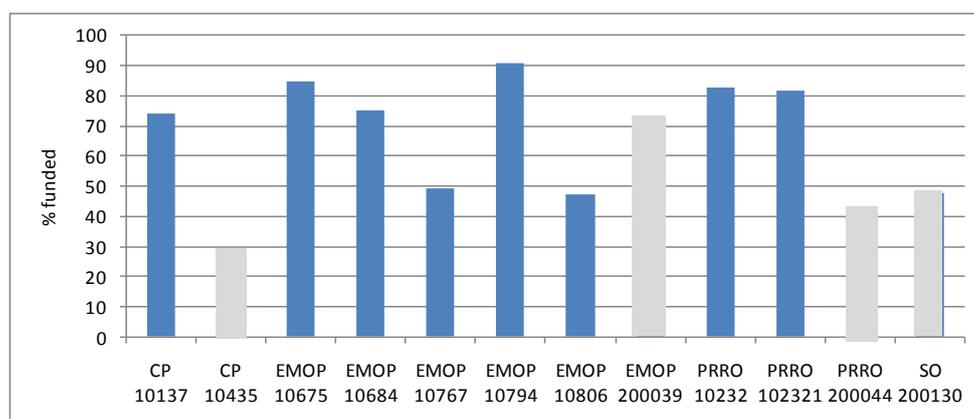
³ International Food Policy Research Institute Discussion Paper No. 00955. *Impacts of the Triple Global Crisis on Growth and Poverty in Yemen*. 2010. Washington D.C.

75 percent of the population lives – have the most severe poverty and the highest poverty gap index, and there has been far less progress against poverty in rural than in urban areas.

WFP's Portfolio in Yemen

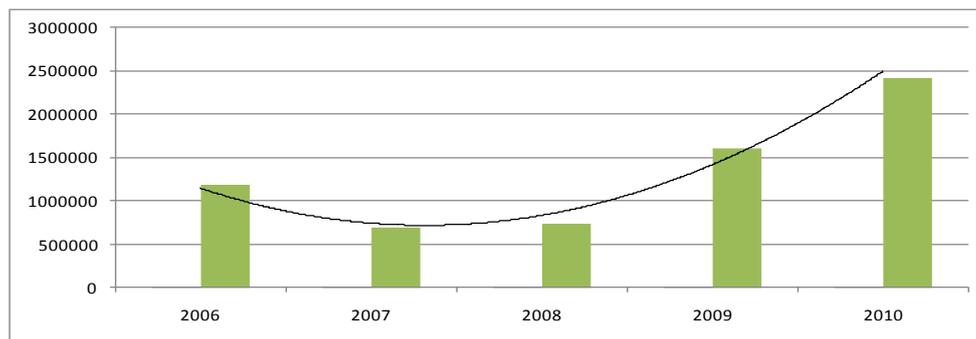
6. During the period under evaluation (2006–2010), WFP's food assistance increased significantly and the overall focus of the portfolio shifted towards humanitarian relief and emergency response. During this period, WFP implemented 12 operations in Yemen, four of which are still ongoing, with total expenditures growing from US\$7.5 million in 2006 to US\$38.8 million in 2010. These operations include two CPs addressing education and nutrition outcomes; three protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs) for Somali refugees; three emergency operations (EMOPs) for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northern Sa'adah region; two EMOPs for flood-affected people in eastern Yemen; one EMOP to mitigate high food prices following the food, fuel and financial crises; and one special operation providing air passenger services and logistics for United Nations agencies in the Sa'adah region. Reflecting the portfolio's shift in focus, the planned budget went from approximately 95 percent development assistance in 2006 to approximately 85 percent humanitarian assistance in 2010.
7. Funding for operations was below that budgeted (Figure 1). Later in the evaluation period, funding for non-emergency operations was more limited, including for CP 10435 and the refugee operation, PRRO 200044. The response to high food prices was also considerably underfunded. As the scale of the portfolio increased, so did the average number of beneficiaries reached each year from 2007 (Figure 2), with almost 2.5 million receiving food assistance in 2010.

**Figure 1: Planned versus actual funding –
WFP Yemen operations (2006–2010)**



Sources: WFP project documents and Standardized Project Reports (SPRs).

PRRO 200044, EMOP 200039, CP 10435, and special operation 200130 (light shade of grey) are ongoing and will receive more funds in 2011.

Figure 2: Annual average number of beneficiaries (actual) by year

Sources: WFP project documents and SPRs.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

8. WFP operations in Yemen are generally well aligned with the Government's humanitarian objectives. WFP has responded quickly, efficiently and effectively to government requests to help deal with crises ranging from IDPs fleeing from war in the north to the impact of high food prices in world markets on Yemen's most food-insecure citizens. Most WFP work in Yemen reflects government policy statements and priority fields of intervention.
9. The WFP portfolio is in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), having shortened the first CP to align with the 2007–2011 UNDAF. WFP priorities are also in line with the 2011–2015 UNDAF, which will provide a framework for the new CP. The evaluation observed that WFP has provided significant leadership in the consolidated appeals process for humanitarian funding and planning in Yemen.
10. The evaluation team found two general areas of divergence from the priorities of the Government and other humanitarian/development agencies. First, the use of cash as a safety net and to support food security objectives is prioritized in strategy documents and was discussed by national-level stakeholders; WFP is of the opinion that cash interventions are not yet appropriate in Yemen and that they carry a high risk. Monetization of WFP food rations is also a challenge for beneficiaries in areas with weak food markets, and carries risks for beneficiaries. Some stakeholders felt that because many of the food security crises facing poor households in Yemen are chronic, they require development solutions rather than short-term relief solutions. However, the scale of WFP humanitarian relief operations shifts the overall focus of the response among all actors.
11. WFP works well with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the context of IDP and refugee camps managed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. WFP's leadership of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee logistics cluster was commended by many stakeholders in humanitarian agencies, and its co-leadership of the food security cluster was also praised by those looking to see food security placed higher on the agenda than it has been in the past. However, coordination with some United Nations agencies varies. On the ground, implementation units working with WFP and other United Nations agencies may share office space, but do not coordinate or even necessarily talk to each other about working together and improving their impact on beneficiary groups. The United Nations country

team (UNCT) is working to improve joint efforts and coordination among agencies, but there has been limited progress so far. WFP could provide more leadership in this area.

12. The portfolio is closely aligned with WFP's Strategic Objectives for the period 2008–2013. To varying degrees, each operation cuts across more than one Strategic Objective. Generally, most activities fall within Strategic Objectives 1, 3 and 4, as expected, but WFP's analytic work and policy advocacy have made cross-cutting contributions to all areas.

Strategic Choices

13. The evaluation analysed the strategic choices made over the period evaluated and the factors that were critical to this decision-making. Generally, the most important factors were the availability of funding, the urgency of emergency situations, and the use of data and other evidence.
14. The funding environment had a major effect on the portfolio and the choice of operations. Given major donors' prioritization of humanitarian emergency, WFP has pursued emergency funding, in line with its corporate mandate. However, government strategies are prioritizing development solutions for many of the chronic issues in Yemen – such as malnutrition and food insecurity – and for these areas WFP has had to work carefully within short-term programming modalities to address long-term or chronic challenges. This will likely continue to be a challenge, as the donor environment is increasingly becoming polarized. This presents a particular challenge for development operations, and WFP must explore its available partnership options to plan and implement longer-term interventions.
15. Over the evaluation period, three major crises have been determining factors in WFP's strategic changes to its portfolio. The first is the outbreak and continuance of the Houthi wars in the north, which is now a major focus of WFP's operational resources, and the second is the arrival of a continually increasing number of Somali refugees. Appropriate strategic decisions were made for responding to the IDP crisis in the north and the continuing refugee needs in the south. The third determining factor has been high food price crises. The food price shocks of 2008/09 and late 2010/early 2011 required an immediate response to an acute situation. But the awareness they created of chronic food insecurity issues was also a significant driver of the decision to focus on chronic food insecurity throughout the country. WFP used the opportunity created by donors' increased awareness to design and fund a longer-term safety net operation. Such crises have thus been factors both in how WFP reacts and how it plans its future interventions.
16. Through its analytic work, WFP has been successful in placing food insecurity, hunger and nutrition issues on the national agenda. Primarily through the use of evidence generated by the comprehensive food security survey (CFSS), but also through management's participation and advocacy, the national food security strategy has focused on issues regarding access to food and the overall availability of food. It was noted that WFP was very effective in ensuring that these issues – as proximate causes of food insecurity – were included in the strategy, rather than basing it on a broader focus on livelihoods, income generation and rural development. There is opportunity to provide similar leadership in the area of nutrition, with implementation of the national nutrition strategy.

17. The evaluation team concluded that the one-off data collection analysis and the regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems were most useful for the planning and preparatory work of the overall portfolio. However, strategic decisions to adapt or change operational activities are based less on the generation and use of evidence about programme outputs and outcomes, and more on the general humanitarian situation, security considerations, funding and discussions with cooperating partners. Better use of outcome monitoring and the cross-checking of data are encouraged.

Portfolio Performance and Results

18. The evaluation focused primarily on the technical areas of food security, nutrition and education, with a fourth emphasis on the safety net modality, which is an increasingly important part of the portfolio. The evaluation team analysed the performance and results within these areas, using the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Cross-cutting factors that affected the results were also analysed.

Relevance

19. The evaluation concludes that the WFP portfolio was well aligned with the humanitarian needs of households in Yemen, including IDPs in the north and east, refugees in the south, and vulnerable households affected by high food prices. The scale of the portfolio increased dramatically during the evaluation period, to meet the increasing needs of emergency-affected areas and WFP's role as the lead response agency throughout most of Yemen. Chronic poverty and food insecurity levels throughout the country easily exceed emergency thresholds, and WFP is well positioned, logistically and strategically, to take advantage of donor funding and to implement activities where needed. The evaluation found no major issues concerning the portfolio's alignment to meet humanitarian objectives.

Efficiency

20. The evaluation examined the outputs across different operations, and considered their efficiency with respect to other humanitarian actors and, especially, the modality of their implementation. Given the scale of WFP operations, it is difficult to compare WFP's output delivery with that of other agencies. Internally, WFP has focused on the efficiency of its operations, through food procurement on local markets, competitive tendering of local transport companies, and other logistics arrangements. Long-standing contracts with reliable transport companies have incurred limited liability and losses under difficult circumstances. In general, the efficiency of the portfolio has improved with the increasing scale of operations and better collaboration with partners. An example of good practice is work with the Social Welfare Fund to deliver safety net rations, which provides efficiency gains to both agencies. Further efforts to develop partnerships will improve operational efficiency. The efficiency of some aspects of the portfolio was likely undermined by breaks in funding. The design of the safety nets and nutrition interventions requires predictable and consistent food rations; as well as mitigating the potential nutritional benefits, pipeline breaks in operations cause confusion among beneficiaries and challenges for the cooperating partners responding to unmet demand.

Effectiveness

21. The extent to which the portfolio objectives were achieved was analysed through the available data and through cross-checking with a range of key stakeholders. Generally, the outcome-level data reported on WFP operations were insufficient for this, and many operations are designed with aspirational objectives rather than those that can be measured within the given timeframes. In spite of this challenge, the evaluation concludes that the portfolio's effectiveness is most evident in the emergency response and refugee operations. The rapid response to IDP food insecurity in northern Yemen has mitigated internal migration and met life-saving needs of the people affected by conflict. The same is true of similar responses to floods in eastern Yemen. More than 14,000 refugees rely on rations from WFP as a crucial component of their coping strategies. The effectiveness of the development-oriented aspects of the portfolio has been limited, partly because of the limited scale of operations and partly because of funding limitations. The available outcome data for this aspect of the portfolio were inconsistent, and stakeholders, while appreciating the interventions, noted that they needed to be scaled up and/or revitalized. There may be opportunities for collaboration with other agencies working towards the same development outcomes, which would increase the effectiveness of WFP inputs.

Impact

22. The portfolio's positive contributions to broader humanitarian and development objectives in Yemen were also most evident in the humanitarian aspects of the portfolio. As a lead agency, in terms of resources, logistics, coordination and the timeliness of response, WFP contributed to meeting life-saving needs in conflict-affected northern regions and flood-affected areas in the east. In refugee operations, WFP certainly contributes to meeting the short-term food needs of the population in Kharaz refugee camp. However, the CPs' contribution to overall objectives in education and nutrition has been more limited. There is no evidence, beyond somewhat inconsistent data, that these interventions have made a lasting contribution to national objectives. Significant underfunding has mitigated their effectiveness.

Sustainability

23. The evaluation focused on the degree to which the portfolio's operations have developed hand-over options, capacity development strategies and policy advocacy. In general, efforts in these areas are limited, but they are also generally beyond the remit of WFP, given the circumstances and orientation of the portfolio. The Government has limited capacity, especially at decentralized levels, to manage and coordinate emergency response operations, and institutional strengthening of this type is beyond the scope of WFP operations. Within the portfolio, training activities have taken place to enable WFP cooperating partners, including government actors, to manage operational implementation, but this is not institutional strengthening or capacity development in the wider sense. The evaluation team observed that communication and policy advocacy with national and sub-national stakeholders were underutilized in the education and nutrition areas, and would be welcomed by government and donor stakeholders. Capacity development, dialogue and policy advocacy would increase the sustainability of these aspects of the portfolio, even when funding of on-the-ground interventions is variable.

Cross-Cutting Factors

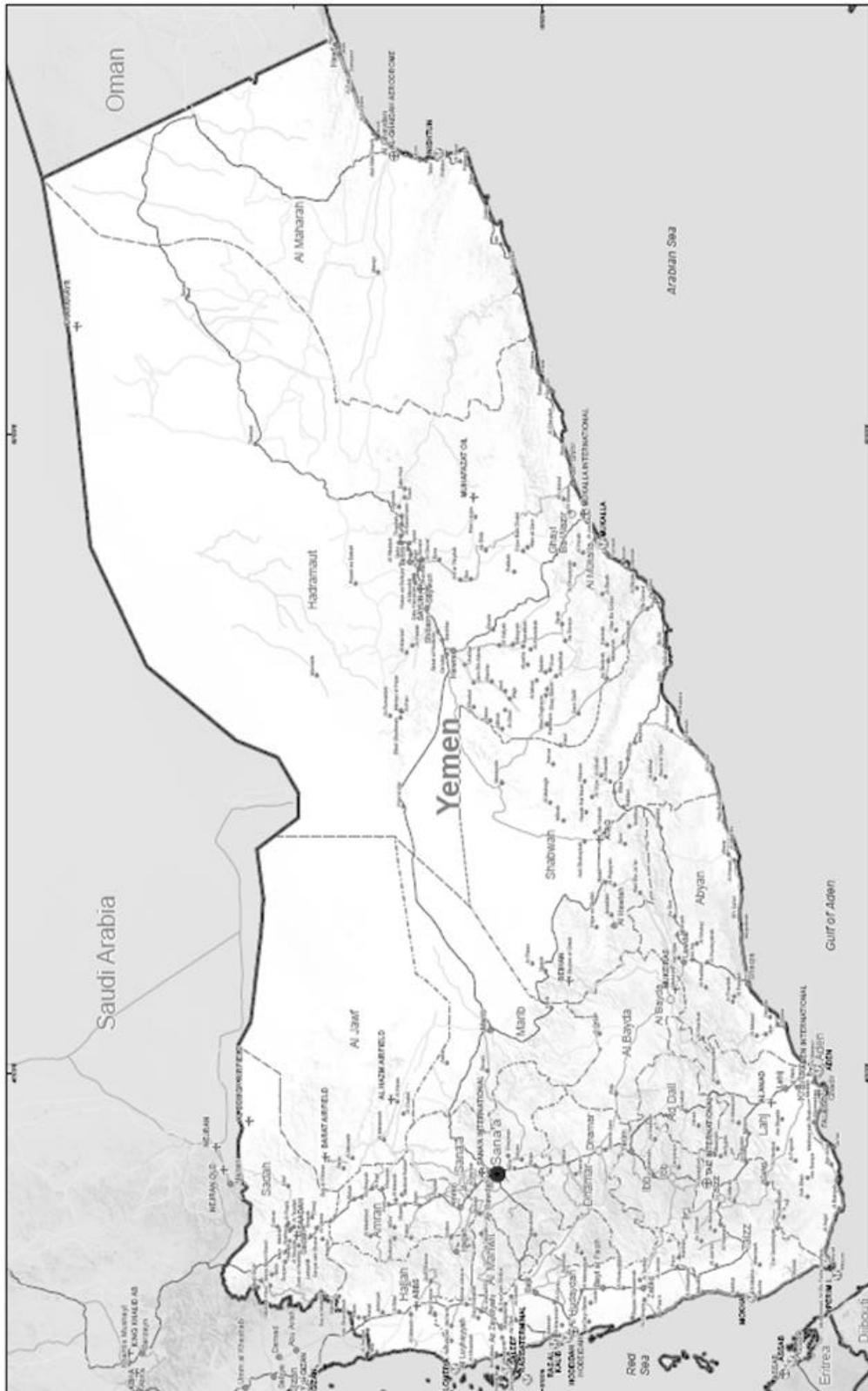
24. The WFP country office has established excellent relationships with its government counterparts, which is critical to its ability to respond and gain access to vulnerable communities throughout Yemen quickly. By leading UNCT delegations in negotiations with Houthi rebels in the north of Yemen to obtain access to IDPs in Sa'adah governorate, WFP has demonstrated its leadership in establishing safe corridors, and the impartiality of its operations.
25. In its analysis of portfolio performance, the evaluation team noted several issues stemming from the lack of monitoring data on the results/outcomes of WFP operations in Yemen. In general, very few data about the outcomes of operations are collected and data are not cross-checked with other data sources, including those of partners and the Government. This has implications for annual reporting and for strategic management of the portfolio. One-off exercises, such as the CFSS of 2009/10, are a very valuable contribution, and linkages between these data and those collected regularly would assist the monitoring of results at the outcome level.
26. The WFP Office in Yemen has 93 nationally recruited and 12 internationally recruited staff members based in Sana'a and four sub-offices. All staff demonstrated excellent commitment to WFP and knowledge of the operations. WFP should do its utmost to retain these valuable staff members, even if funding dips in the future. It was observed that good communication between senior management and all staff was a critical factor for success in the management of operational changes during the period under evaluation. In cases where it is necessary to redesign operations to take advantage of new funding or partnership opportunities, all staff must be encouraged to innovate and adapt interventions, rather than maintaining the current situation. Reinforcing the overall office capacity in nutrition and, perhaps, livelihoods/social protection programming would allow WFP to engage more effectively in national policy discussions of these issues.

Recommendations

27. **Recommendation 1:** WFP should consider balancing the focus of its operations to include both short- and long-term aspects of the emergency and chronic problems in Yemen.
28. The evaluation recommends that WFP explore the potential for forming partnerships and leveraging its resources – investments, M&E and policy advocacy – to address long-term solutions to chronic issues, such as general food insecurity and malnutrition. Although funding for shorter-term operations may be more accessible, WFP can position itself as a key partner in longer-term programming.
29. **Recommendation 2:** WFP should revitalize its fundraising for development-oriented operations in Yemen.
30. Owing to the funding context, WFP has had to fold its nutrition objectives into its EMOPs and PRROs, while food-for-education/take-home ration operations have shrunk to a fraction of their original size and scope. Development programmes require longer-term and more stable and predictable funding, so WFP should design and implement a differentiated advocacy and fundraising strategy in response to the needs of its development mandate.
31. **Recommendation 3:** WFP should further develop and invest in joint programmes and other collaborative partnership arrangements with other United Nations agencies, large NGOs and donors.

32. WFP interventions are judged to be most effective when WFP works closely with other specialized entities to deliver them. However, in the CPs and the nutritional components of the high food prices EMOP and the follow-on safety net PRRO, it is operating in a far more stand-alone mode. This does not take advantage of opportunities to coordinate and collaborate with partners and provide integrated services to ensure maximal impact from its contributions.
33. **Recommendation 4:** WFP should further emphasize planning with, preparation with and training for its government and cooperating partners.
34. Some government counterparts and non-governmental cooperating partners wish to be full counterparts, through more training, better equipment and participatory approaches to planning and implementation. This also increases the potential for eventual hand-over of WFP operations, especially in the education and nutrition sectors.
35. **Recommendation 5:** M&E systems should be enhanced so that results can be compared over time and space and the outcomes of operations can be measured.
36. Efforts to collect historical and spatial – intervention versus non-intervention – data are insufficient to allow good assessments of the portfolio’s overall results and contributions. Improvement depends on both designing systems that measure impact and training government and community representatives to systematically and reliably collect the required information on results at the outcome level – not just WFP inputs/outputs. There are also many opportunities to collaborate with other implementing agencies and government departments in data collection, analysis and dissemination exercises.
37. **Recommendation 6:** Technical capacity should be increased in the areas of health, nutrition and, possibly, livelihoods or social protection.
38. To increase its participation in policy advocacy at the national level, WFP should augment its staff capacity in health and nutrition. This would allow it to balance field operations with higher-level planning, policy and advocacy. Additional expertise in livelihoods or social protection would also assist in establishing partnerships with agencies active in these areas and augmenting these aspects in future WFP operations.
39. **Recommendation 7:** The data and findings of the 2010 CFSS should be disseminated further, and a follow-up survey should be planned.
40. The CFSS of 2010 was very well received. It should be disseminated more widely among key stakeholders in Yemen and repeated regularly, to allow longitudinal analysis.

ANNEX



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Food Programme (WFP) concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.

ACRONYMS USED IN THE DOCUMENT

| | |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------|
| CFSS | comprehensive food security survey |
| CP | country programme |
| CPE | country portfolio evaluation |
| EMOP | emergency operation |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| IDP | internally displaced person |
| M&E | monitoring and evaluation |
| NGO | non-governmental organization |
| PRRO | protracted relief and recovery operation |
| UNCT | United Nations country team |
| UNDAF | United Nations Development Assistance Framework |