

Chad: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2003–2009)

Context - Chad is a least-developed country with high rates of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition, and generally low social indicators. WFP has assisted the country in addressing its hunger needs since 1963. In 2003, with the influx of refugees from the Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR), there was a significant shift in the type, size and complexity of WFP's operations. Previously made up of small-scale development operations in the Sahelian zone, the portfolio became dominated by emergency operations (EMOPs), focusing on assistance to Sudanese refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities in the east, and to refugees from CAR in the south.

The WFP portfolio in Chad - The portfolio is large by WFP standards. From 2003 to 2009, WFP implemented ten food assistance operations in Chad: two country programmes (CPs), seven EMOPs, and one protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO). The total cost of the portfolio is US\$711 million: 87 percent devoted to the EMOPs, 10 percent to the CPs and the rest to the PRRO. The portfolio operations seek to contribute to Strategic Objective 1 - Save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies – through assistance to refugees, IDPs and other vulnerable groups whose food and nutrition have been adversely affected by shocks; Strategic Objective 2 – Prevent acute hunger and invest in disaster preparedness and mitigation measures by supporting and strengthening communities' resilience to shocks; and Strategic Objective 4 – Reduce chronic hunger and undernutrition – by increasing levels of education, basic nutrition and health. WFP also implemented six special operations to augment logistics capacity and provide flight services, but these were not included in the evaluation.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation aimed to generate evidence in support of decision-making regarding WFP's strategic positioning in Chad. Its objectives were to provide accountability, by reporting on the portfolio's performance and results; and to support learning, by generating evidence-based analysis and insights on the way in which the portfolio and its operations were planned and managed.

This report evaluates WFP's country portfolio – defined as the ten food assistance operations undertaken between 2003 and 2009 – and focuses on three questions: i) How well did WFP position itself strategically and align with government and partner strategies? ii) How did WFP make choices, and how strategic were these? and iii) How did the portfolio perform, and what were the results?

The evaluation was conducted by a consultancy firm, with fieldwork taking place in February 2010. The evaluation report was presented to the Executive Board in November 2010.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

The portfolio was well aligned with the WFP corporate strategy and with the national policy framework and government sectoral objectives, particularly in the education sector, where school feeding clearly contributes to the national goal of education for all. Government policies and strategies have not been backed by sufficient budget allocation. Weak national institutions, capacity and commitment have limited WFP's incentive and ability to work effectively in partnership with the Government. As a result, there is little government ownership of the WFP strategy and programmes.

While WFP carried out important analytic work on national hunger and food security issues, it did not apply its analyses to influence national discussions, contribute to government or partner strategies or build national technical capacity towards institutionalization.

Previously, WFP did not follow the cycle of UN agency-wide planning tools, but now participates in their design. While the portfolio is currently aligned with UN strategies, there is only limited joint planning, implementation and synergy between WFP programmes and those of main partners, except for the effective partnership with UNHCR to assist refugees.

Making strategic choices

Programme choices and implementation options have been bound by external factors such as the magnitude of needs, serious security concern and substantial logistics challenges. Little donor interest and low capacity of partners affected programme and partnership options in the Sahelian Zone. In the east, the response strategy took into consideration partners' strategies, programmes and the possibilities for synergy. This was rendered possible by the high level of resources generally available to assist Sudanese refugees, and the consequent presence of more partners.

Corporate policies clearly guided the CO's choices of programme categories, but the parameters that define these categories are both limited and limiting. Response strategies and activity choices tended to be driven by what is possible within each programme type, and not necessarily by what is the best programme option. The portfolio has been viewed and managed as a set of discrete food assistance operations, rather than an integrated portfolio with a clear vision, common goal and strategy.

The CO has conducted an impressive amount of analytical work to enhance its understanding of national hunger and food security issues and to guide its decision-making. There is a clear link between assessment findings and the geographic targeting of operations. However, there is not always a clear link between assessment findings and the development of response strategies. The M&E system has generally been weak, focusing on outputs, which provide limited insights for informing decision-making on the basis of results. However, in the past year, significant efforts have been made to enhance M&E standards and systems.

Portfolio Performance and Results

Relevance and appropriateness. The activities were relevant and the beneficiary selection criteria were generally adequate. Assistance to refugees was particularly relevant, however, levels of assistance must be reviewed in light of the increased economic activity in refugee camps and of the high malnutrition levels of the Chadian populations in the east and Sahelian zone.

Efficiency. 73.5 percent of the financial requirements were met, however, the larger refugee operations were funded at higher levels than the smaller CPs. Between 75 percent and 200 percent of the intended beneficiaries were reached, with an annual average of 500,000 persons. Assistance increased over time from 200,000 beneficiaries in 2003 to 885,000 in 2009.

GFD had the highest absolute and planned-versus-actual numbers of beneficiaries and tonnage, reflecting the high priority placed on the life-saving objectives of refugee assistance. School feeding was second but reached fewer beneficiaries than planned. FFW decreased over time, to represent only a small proportion of activities since activities in the east were repeatedly suspended.

Efficiency was hampered by activities being designed and implemented within the context of individual operations. This has limited the development of systems and standards applicable to all operations and cross-fertilization among operations. Staff are dispersed in N'Djamena and 12 sub-offices, rendering management and capacity development difficult and hampering a coordinated technical approach to activities. This has also resulted in a highly centralized decision-making structure, which has at times delayed implementation decisions.

The cost of the food items almost doubled during the portfolio evaluation period but remained in line with corporate average. The ratio of financial resources set aside for logistic operations has been almost twice the WFP average. However, the high logistics costs are justified by the extremely difficult operational conditions. The logistic operations were performed professionally and efficiently and were highly supportive of operations.

Effectiveness and impact. Assistance to refugees has been effective: it clearly saved lives and contributed to reducing malnutrition, which has stabilized at acceptable levels (SO1). However, the effectiveness of activities supporting IDPs and the host population in eastern Chad has been limited by the low level of activity compared with the high level of need. Several factors have limited the effectiveness of FFW in strengthening communities' resilience to shocks (SO 2) including the frequent suspensions of activities, the short time span of contracts with partners, and the limited resources devoted to non-food items. Except in refugee camps, nutrition activities were insufficient for the needs in the east and Sahelian zone, where nutrition rates deteriorated in many cases.

School enrolment including of girls increased significantly during the period and school feeding contributed to that. WFP's support in the field of HIV/AIDS encouraged people to get tested and shows positive nutrition effects.

Sustainability. In several camps in the south, assistance along with a conducive environment has helped refugees to become self-reliant, allowing reduced assistance levels, however, there is little possibility for handing over any of the WFP portfolio activities to the Government.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The country office should develop a clear five-year strategy and vision for the overall country portfolio, which would permeate all country office operations and guide programme decisions and resource allocation, with a view to increasing impact and sustainability. Consultation with major stakeholders, including the Government, other United Nations agencies, multilateral and bilateral donors and NGOs, is also recommended, to ensure realism, relevance and coordination.

Recommendation 2: The country office should develop a management approach that supports implementation of the strategy and attainment of the vision, by integrating decision-making across the entire country portfolio. Several specific actions are recommended:

- a) Develop a detailed framework, specifying who is responsible for routine and exceptional decisions and who should be informed.
- b) Give increased responsibility – with proper oversight by senior manager – to sub-offices, especially the Abeche office in eastern Chad.
- c) Prepare a more detailed and integrated annual work planning process, describing major activities, roles and responsibilities to guide and empower sub-office managers.
- d) Develop a strategy to ensure that sufficient staff are available, taking into consideration rest and recuperation, etc., and that staff live and work in adequate conditions.

Recommendation 3: The cost of implementing programme activities should be reviewed during development of the WFP country strategy for Chad, with a view to lowering the high costs of implementing projects in Chad. A complete portfolio review be conducted to see where cost synergies can be gained, such as by clustering activities in smaller areas, etc.

Recommendation 4: Given the size and complexity of the portfolio, the country office, the regional bureau and HQ should clearly identify what technical support and backstopping are required from the regional bureau and Headquarters and should give more consideration to staffing needs and staff rotations, to ensure smooth portfolio implementation and management.

Recommendation 5: The country office's systems and standards must be strengthened, to increase operational efficiency and reinforce programmes.

Recommendation 6: The country office should develop a systematic approach with its main partners, to strengthen partnership, integration and coordination with the Government.

Recommendation 7: The country office should review the scope and content of activities, and the potential for integrating them both within operations and across programme categories. This would help ensure focused efforts towards high-level performance and results.

Recommendation 8: The country office needs a fully qualified public relations officer to ensure that the message of WFP's good work is communicated and that important emergency situations receive sufficient attention.

Reference: Full and summary reports of the Evaluation are available at: <http://www.wfp.org/about/evaluation>
For more information, please contact the WFP Office of Evaluation.