

Evaluation Brief



Yemen: An evaluation of WFP's portfolio (2006–2010)

Context

Country: Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East and one of the poorest in the world, in spite of petroleum reserves that have provided the majority of government revenues for many years. While gross domestic product has grown over the past decade, growth has slowed during the period under evaluation and a series of crises has created difficult conditions for the people and the economy of the country. 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 2008, the global Food-Fuel-Financial crisis led to a dramatic increase in food prices in Yemen, which imports as much as 85 per cent of its consumption needs. At the same time, refugees, mainly from Somalia, arrive in greater numbers every month. There are significant equity issues with respect to poverty; rural areas, where over 75 per cent of the population lives, have the greatest severity of poverty and highest poverty gap index and progress against poverty in rural areas has been far less than urban areas.

WFP Assistance: The Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) covers the 12 World Food Programme (WFP) operations active in Yemen between 2006 and 2010 with four of these operations still on-going. This period was chosen to cover the transition of the WFP portfolio in Yemen from one concentrating on development (education and nutrition) to the one presently focused on humanitarian responses to various shocks and crises.

During the portfolio period, WFP's food assistance increased significantly and the overall focus of the portfolio shifted toward humanitarian relief and emergency response. Total expenditures grew from US\$7.5 million in 2006 to US\$38.8 million in 2010. The operations under the portfolio period include the following: two country programmes addressing education and nutrition outcomes; three relief / recovery operations for Somali refugees; three emergency operations for internally displaced persons (IDP) in the northern Sa'adah region; two emergency operations for flood affected people in eastern Yemen; one emergency operation to mitigate high food prices; and one special operation for air passenger service and logistics for UN agencies in the Sa'adah region. Reflecting the shift in focus of the portfolio, the planned budget went from approximately 95 per cent development assistance in 2006 to approximately 85 per cent humanitarian assistance in 2010.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation serves the dual objectives of accountability and learning. It enabled the Yemen country office to make informed strategic decisions for its next country strategy and to improve ongoing operations. The evaluation has focused on three main questions: 1. the strategic alignment of the country portfolio with the needs of people in Yemen, with the policies and priorities of the Government of Yemen and with those of other multilateral and bilateral agencies and donors, 2. the key factors behind the strategic choices made during the portfolio period, and 3. the performance and results of the portfolio.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

WFP operations in Yemen are generally well aligned with Government humanitarian objectives. WFP has responded quickly and efficiently/effectively to Government requests to help deal with crises ranging from IDPs from the war in the north to the impact of high food prices in world markets on their most food insecure citizens.

The WFP portfolio is in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), having shortened the first country programme to align with the 2007 – 2011 UNDAF. The evaluation observed that the WFP has provided significant leadership in the Consolidated Appeals Process for humanitarian funding and planning in Yemen.

The WFP lead on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee logistics cluster was commended by many stakeholders in humanitarian agencies and its co-leading of the food security cluster was also found to be excellent. However, coordination with some UN agencies is varied. The United Nations Country Team is making efforts to have improved joint efforts and better coordination amongst the agencies but there has been limited progress thus far.

The evaluation team found two general areas of divergence from the priorities of Government and other humanitarian/development agencies. First, the use of cash as a safety net and in support of food security objectives is prioritized within key strategy documents and was discussed by key national-level stakeholders; the WFP does not feel that cash interventions are yet appropriate in Yemen and that they carry a high risk. Second, some key stakeholders felt that many of the food security crises facing poor households in Yemen are chronic in nature and require development solutions rather than short-term relief solutions.

Strategic Choices

The evaluation analyzed the strategic choices made over the portfolio period and factors that were critical to this decision-making. Generally, the influence of funding, the immediacy of emergency situations/crises, and the use of data/evidence were the most important factors.

The funding environment has had a major effect on the portfolio and the choice of operations over the portfolio period. Given the prioritization of humanitarian emergency among the major donors, the WFP has pursued this funding and indeed this is aligned with its corporate mandate.

Three major humanitarian emergencies, over the portfolio period, have been the determining factors in the WFP's strategic changes in its portfolio. The first has been the start and continuance of the Houthi wars in the north, which is now a major focus of the WFP's operational resources. The second is the continually increasing number of Somali refugees arriving on the shores of Yemen. And third is the high food price crisis of 2008/9. Both national and international attention to the effects of this crisis in developing countries was a significant driver of

the decision to focus on chronic food insecurity throughout the country.

Through its analytic work, the WFP has been successful at placing issues of food insecurity, hunger and nutrition on the national agenda. Primarily through the use of evidence generated by the Comprehensive Food Security Survey (CFSS) but also through participation and advocacy by senior management, the national food security strategy has focused on issues regarding access to food and overall availability of food commodities.

Portfolio Performance and Results

The evaluation focused primarily on the technical areas of food security, nutrition, and education, with a fourth emphasis on the safety net modality that is of increasing emphasis within the portfolio. The evaluation team analyzed the performance and results within these areas using the following evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Relevance: The relevance of the portfolio was evident in its alignment with the humanitarian needs of households in Yemen, including IDPs in northern and eastern Yemen, refugees in the south, and to vulnerable households affected by high food prices. The scale of the portfolio increased dramatically since 2006 in order to meet the increasing needs of emergency-affected areas and the WFP is the lead response agency throughout most of Yemen. Chronic poverty and food insecurity throughout the country easily crosses emergency thresholds and the 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 alignment of the portfolio to meet humanitarian objectives.

Efficiency: The evaluation considered efficiency with respect to other humanitarian actors and especially in the modality of their implementation. Given the scale of the WFP operations, the comparability of output-delivery to other agencies is limited. The WFP has, internally, focused on efficiency of its operations through procurement of food on local markets and competitively tendering local transport companies and other logistics arrangements. In general, the efficiency of the portfolio has improved with the increasing scale of operations and better integration with partners. A good practice example is the close collaboration with the Social Welfare Fund to deliver safety net rations, which provides efficiency gains to both agencies. Further efforts at developing partnerships will improve operational efficiency.

Effectiveness: The effectiveness of the portfolio was analyzed through available data and cross-checking with a range of key stakeholders. The evaluation concludes that the effectiveness of the portfolio 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 for the similar responses to floods in eastern Yemen. Over 14,000 refugees are reliant on rations from the WFP and they utilize these rations as a key component to their coping strategies. The effectiveness of the development-oriented aspects of the portfolio are limited, partially because of the limited scale of the operations and partially because of limited funding.

Impact: The positive impact of the WFP portfolio 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 timeliness of response, the WFP contributed to the life-saving needs in the conflict northern regions and to the flood-affected areas in the east. In the refugee operations WFP certainly contributes to the short-term food needs of the population in the Kharaz refugee camp. However, the contribution of the country programmes to the overall objectives in the education and health/nutrition sectors is more limited.

Sustainability: The sustainability of the portfolio, analyzed via factors such as transition/hand-over options, capacity building

strategies, and policy advocacy, is limited. However, the government of Yemen has a limited capacity, especially at decentralized levels to manage and coordinate emergency response operations and institutional strengthening of this type is beyond the reasonable scope of WFP operations. Indeed, within the portfolio, training activities have taken place to enable WFP implementing partners, including Government stakeholders, to manage operational implementation, but this is not institutional strengthening or capacity building in the larger sense.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall Assessment

Overall, the evaluation team found that the WFP Yemen portfolio of operations, the performance, strategic decision making and alignment with the government of Yemen, are well placed to address the humanitarian needs in Yemen. In an increasingly volatile and political context, the WFP has scaled up its operations, found funding to address emergency needs, and played a key role in moving forward the national food security agenda.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation 2. WFP should revitalize its fund-raising for development-oriented operations in Yemen.

Recommendation 3. WFP should further develop and invest in joint programmes and other collaborative partnership arrangements with other UN agencies, large non-governmental organizations, and donors.

Recommendation 4. should further emphasize planning, preparation with, and training for its Government and cooperating partners.

Recommendation 5. Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems to compare results over time and space and to measure the outcomes the operations.

Recommendation 6. Increase technical capacity in the areas of health/nutrition and potentially in livelihoods/social protection.

Recommendation 7. Further disseminate the data and findings of the 2010 CFSS and plan for a follow-up survey.



Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at

www.wfp.org/evaluation

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