

Evaluation Brief



Haiti: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2005-2010)

Context

With the highest poverty rate in Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti ranks 145 out of 169 countries on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index. A series of natural disasters such as flooding, hurricanes, and the 2010 earthquake exacerbated conditions in a country that was already struggling with high levels of food insecurity and poverty. As a net importer of food, the food-fuel-financial crisis of 2007 – 2008 also added to the country's economic insecurity. These disasters combined with environmental degradation, endemic poverty, and weakened survival mechanisms because of the political, socio-economic and climatic shocks suffered over the past few decades make the country particularly vulnerable.

WFP assistance has increased dramatically from 2005 to 2010, with total direct expenses growing from US\$21.5 million in 2005 to US\$72.6 million in 2009 and nearly US\$300 million in 2010. Similarly, WFP opened 6 new sub-offices during the same period and staff strength increased by a factor of 10 for the international staff and by a factor of 5 for the national staff. In addition to providing general food distribution (GFD) in response to emergencies, WFP Haiti has also been focusing its resources on recovery activities, consisting mainly of school feeding, support to people living with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, mother and child nutrition, and food for work (FFW) and significant new cash for work (CFW) programmes. WFP Haiti has also contributed significantly to the body of analytical resources with solid assessment and analytical capacity, particularly in the vulnerability analysis and mapping unit (VAM) and through the support of the Logistics Cluster.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation serves the dual objectives of accountability and learning. The evaluation has focused on three main questions: 1. the strategic alignment of the country portfolio with the needs of people in Haiti, with the policies and priorities of the Government of Haiti 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.

The Haiti Country Portfolio Evaluation encompasses the 14 WFP operations that were active between May 2005 and December 2010, 9 food assistance operations and 5 special operations.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

WFP planning and implementation are generally well integrated with the Government of Haiti policies and priorities overall, thanks in part to recent improvements to coordination mechanisms in certain sectors such as FFW/CFW and nutrition. However, the engagement, advocacy, and dialogue required for a more active alignment was sometimes weak. A volatile operating environment and insufficient government resources, especially after the earthquake, contributed to these challenges.

WFP Haiti provides strong leadership and collaboration, adding particular value in the clusters where WFP is the lead agency – namely the Food, Logistics, and Emergency Telecommunications Clusters.

WFP Haiti's rapid growth and geographic expansion over the period of evaluation, the country office (CO) was faced with many new coordination challenges, particularly when WFP's interventions extended into new geographic areas where other partners had formerly been dominant.

On a policy level, while WFP Haiti activities are generally aligned with sector specific corporate guidance, there are at times gaps in this guidance. For example, during the period of evaluation, Haiti often found itself responding to rapid onset emergencies. However, up-to-date corporate guidance to support the CO's transition from a period of relative stability to emergency support and back to recovery was not always available. New initiatives such as CFW—which was implemented on such a large scale in Haiti—were not supported by clear operational directives regarding financial and technical procedures at a corporate level.

Making Strategic Choices

WFP Haiti has done an impressive amount of analytical work to increase its understanding of the national hunger and food security issues so it can guide internal WFP programming and operational decisions. The VAM unit provides leadership and technical capacity to undertake assessments with key partners that set the baseline and provide updated analysis when shocks occur. In this sense, WFP is both a key contributor to the content of the analytical information available, helping to place food security issues on the government and international development agenda, and also a strategic partner to the government in developing local capacity to continue this work in the future. In a complex environment such as Haiti, punctuated by repeated shocks and a volatile political landscape, programming decisions more often relied on other factors such as feasibility, capacity, policies and strategic frameworks, or other situational contexts which cannot be captured in a food security assessment, or which can make recommendations from these assessments not feasible or inappropriate. In the food assistance operations, the CO's ability to plan activities in accordance with the level of need is often hampered by the capacity of cooperating partners. The areas that are the most food insecure are hard to reach remote areas with fewer potential partners, forcing the CO to make difficult decisions with a limited budget—a trade-off between reaching a greater number of needy beneficiaries versus reaching a smaller amount of people with a greater relative need.

In terms of type of food assistance within activities (e.g. ration composition and modality selection), operational decisions were made for a variety of reasons including in response to recommendations from various evaluation and/or formulation missions but also changes in funding availability or WFP corporate or joint UN directives. Strategic choices about which modalities to employ in response to emergencies—in the case of school feeding, for example—were not necessarily the most appropriate interventions for a quick response activity with limited duration. While efficiencies associated with capitalizing on complementary distribution channels/partners across activities were implemented in some instances, there are other potential synergies and opportunities that were not exploited.

WFP's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system during the evaluation period was weak, providing a limited amount of data useful for assessing impact and improving programmes. During the evaluation period, the focus was weighted towards collecting and documenting output indicators such as number of tons delivered and beneficiaries, which do not provide the full picture of programme performance and results. The tremendous number of cooperating partners at any given time and their varying levels of reporting capabilities makes outcome level data difficult if not impossible to assess. More robust quantitative and qualitative data about which activities proved to be the most successful and why could help drive more strategic decision-making moving forward.

Portfolio Performance and Results

Relevance. Over the period from 2005 – 2010, the WFP Haiti portfolio consisted of activities in School Feeding, Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition, HIV/TB, CFW/FFW, and GFP. While the size of the portfolio grew by more than 20-fold and the percentage of beneficiaries receiving assistance under each of these interventions changed over time in response to evolving development needs, all 5 activities existed throughout the period of evaluation in line with relevant development challenges in Haiti and corresponding to WFP's five strategic objectives. All WFP programme activities were relevant and appropriate given the level of poverty and need in Haiti. Beneficiaries in all parts of the country visited expressed their appreciation for the assistance they received.

Effectiveness and Efficiency. In a volatile environment such as Haiti, it is a challenge to achieve objectives effectively and efficiently given not only the recurring natural disasters, but also the accompanying changes in national (and international) development priorities and WFP's corporate policy framework, insufficient processes and systems for this context, and reliance on the capacity of cooperating partners. The evaluation team observed consistent discrepancies between the planned beneficiary targets and actual beneficiaries reached across all sectors. This inconsistency seems to result in large part from both deficiencies in the planning process and a lack of accountability for results. Additionally, the challenge of shifting between a development and an emergency context and the associated changes in funding levels and priorities has been a struggle for the CO from both a programme design and systems perspective.

From a logistics perspective, WFP Haiti has a proven capacity to react quickly to emergency situations. Thanks in large part to the high quality of the logistics operations, the required volumes of food-aid were procured, transported, stored, and delivered in a timely manner in accordance with programme requests. WFP is at its best when it leads large-scale general food distribution operations. Generally satisfactory funding levels facilitated the continuation and relatively orderly implementation of activities in Haiti during the period of evaluation. At times the operations suffered from less regular contributions but WFP took measures to mitigate the negative effects.

Impact. While it was clear that WFP was able to reach a very large number of beneficiaries through both general and targeted distribution throughout the period of evaluation, measuring real impact of WFP activities is severely constrained by deficiencies in the M&E system. Outside of some conclusions that one may assume from some national indicators that point to improved trends in the sectors where WFP works and evidence of short-term benefits such as asset creation, there is very little potential for impact analysis. WFP's inability to show relative impact of their interventions is a disadvantage.

Sustainability. In Haiti, nearly half of the total beneficiaries reached since 2005 have benefitted from general food distribution initiatives in response to severe humanitarian crises. While there have been some efforts to build the capacity of the Department of Civil Protection (DPC) to deal with emergencies, it is unlikely that emergency food distribution will be an activity that can be handed over to the government or local cooperating

partners in the near future without substantial additional resources and increased capacity development efforts. In other targeted distribution interventions, some strides have been made towards handover, but overwhelming food insecurity, weakened government capacity after the earthquake, and recent political changes may impede progress towards these goals. In terms of WFP's role in the generation of analytical information, significant efforts have been implemented to transfer capacity to local organizations such as the *Centre National Geographique de Haïti* and the National Coordination for Food Security (CNSA).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall Assessment

Given the extraordinarily challenging operating environment in Haiti over the period of evaluation, the Haiti CO has had some remarkable successes. In addition to recurring natural disasters, WFP Haiti has been faced with other destabilizing factors such as civil and political unrest which characterized the period 2005-2008, the food-fuel-financial crisis of 2007 -- 2008, and the coinciding launch of the WFP new strategic plan. In the midst of this instability, coupled with the complexity of operating within an integrated mission, WFP Haiti has made great strides in partnering with the government and in meeting the changing needs of the Haitian people, both during the response phase as well as during development and recovery.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. WFP Haiti should strengthen its monitoring and evaluation systems to improve consistency and reliability of data and to measure the impact of its operations.

Recommendation 2. WFP Haiti should ensure that the logistics cluster activities continue to be funded and staff retained in order to ensure the continuation of invaluable emergency preparedness and response activities.

Recommendation 3. WFP Corporate to conduct an in-depth review of their management and operational systems in order to identify the causes of systemic procurement and processing problems which arise when operations shift from a GFD programme to more targeted food-aid and cash transfer programmes.

Recommendation 4. WFP Haiti should improve its planning process to develop more realistic targets that can be better aligned with realities of implementation.

Recommendation 5. WFP Haiti should seek out potential for integration across activities and with other partners such as a Model School programme to leverage impact and ensure that their efforts are achieving maximum results.

Recommendation 6. The awareness among the CO staff of the true cost of the various component parts of the operations should be enhanced.

Recommendation 7. WFP Haiti should take advantage of more ambitious and long lasting capacity development projects in emergency preparedness.

Recommendation 8. WFP Haiti should develop strategic partnerships with cooperating partners for rapid deployment in emergency and recovery operations.



Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at www.wfp.org/evaluation

For more information please contact the Office of Evaluation WFP.evaluation@WFP.org