

# Evaluation Brief



## Zimbabwe: An Evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2006-2010)

### Context

Zimbabwe once had a thriving economy and was a net exporter of agricultural products, but between 2000 and 2008 the macroeconomic conditions steadily declined.

The numbers of food insecure households rose dramatically during the 2006 to 2010 period – peaking in 2008 – as a result of the collapse of the Zimbabwe economy. Food availability was drastically affected by extreme hyperinflation until early 2009, when the economy stabilized after some economic and political interventions. Zimbabwe is a high HIV and tuberculosis burdened country. In addition, a cholera outbreak emerged in late 2008. The World Health Organization estimated that half of Zimbabwe's population (out of approximately 13 million people) was at risk, mainly because of poverty, poor living conditions, and poor access to quality healthcare.

Several factors in early 2009 changed the prospects in Zimbabwe. The dollarization of the economy, the liberalization of markets, and the Global Political Agreement stabilized the macroeconomic conditions that led to an impressive economic turnaround in 2009-2010.

### The WFP portfolio in Zimbabwe

During the period under review, WFP implemented one regional and one national Protracted Relief and recovery Operations, and one Special Operation (SO) in response to the cholera outbreak in 2008.

Two distinct periods: During the first three years of the portfolio (2006-2008), WFP provided a massive food aid response - targeting almost 7 million beneficiaries in 2008. The macroeconomic recovery and political stabilization in early 2009 provided fertile conditions to pilot and test some innovative approaches. WFP and its partners shifted from large-scale, in kind food aid to a more flexible and responsive programme in the last two years of the portfolio (2009-2010).

The portfolio activities related to food assistance consisted mainly of Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF), nutrition support to people living with HIV&AIDS, Food/Cash for assets (FFA/CFA), and cash transfers/e- vouchers.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation serves the dual objectives of accountability and learning. It enables the country office to make informed strategic decisions for its next country strategy and to improve ongoing and future operations.

The evaluation has focused on three main questions: 1. How well WFP positioned itself strategically and aligned with government and partner strategies, 2. How well WFP made strategic choices, and 3. How the portfolio performed, and what results were achieved.

### Key Findings and Conclusions

#### Alignment and Strategic Positioning

WFP's alignment with government policies was complicated by the need to work within the government policy and operational framework during this turbulent period in Zimbabwe's history. Despite this challenging environment the Country Office (CO) managed to move into alignment. WFP worked diligently to implement its programmes in response to the needs.

Although the WFP portfolio was well aligned with other UN agencies at the broad conceptual level and at the policy, strategy, and technical level; there was a weaker alignment at the implementation level.

There was good synergy with other UN agencies, for example the collaboration with UNICEF and FAO to develop operational guidelines for the Food Deficit Mitigation Strategy. Another positive example of synergy is the SO in response to the cholera crisis, where the humanitarian community benefited from WFP Logistics' expertise and its cargo flow monitoring system. There is however potential for greater synergy in partnering on FFA/CFA, and on nutrition support to antiretroviral therapy (ART) activities.

Finally, the evaluation found that the country portfolio was well aligned with the current Strategic Plan. Several of the new activities initiated by the CO in 2009 and 2010 - such as cash transfers, CFA, e-voucher, local purchases – were in the spirit of reviving agricultural and food markets.

#### Making Strategic Choices

WFP has been a leader in analysing the national hunger and food security issues in Zimbabwe, and leveraging that information to make program decisions and influence strategic decisions of government, donors, and NGOs. The CO maintained a high degree of flexibility to tailor its instruments to respond quickly to emerging needs and changes in national policy.

The evaluation found good examples of the use of information, for example that generated through the Community and Household Survey in decision-

making. The findings of a previous evaluation of the cash transfers program were used to guide the design of the Cash for Cereals (CFC) pilot. WFP complemented internal capacity with external expertise to guide the implementation of new instruments such as CFC and e-vouchers.

Political and economic shocks were the main external drivers of strategic choices, while WFP policies were the main internal driver. Those external events dictated where and how much food assistance was required and how it was to be targeted at different times of the period under review. The CO appropriately identified how the realities on the ground were changing. In the 2006 to early 2009 period; the external factors necessitated increasingly larger levels of VGF. Cash transfers were not an option given hyperinflation and FFA was not an efficient means of reaching the large numbers of people that needed assistance. In 2009, as the political situation and the economy regained relative stability, some changes in orientation of the country portfolio were possible. The CO worked closely with partners to analyse and understand the government policies and strategies and how to re-orientate its programme and activities.

### Portfolio Performance and Results

The evaluation team analysed the performance of the activities implemented during the portfolio period using the following evaluation criteria: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact, and sustainability. The evaluation concluded that the country portfolio generally achieved a high degree of performance in results, especially given the complicated and shifting political and economic environment.

**Relevance.** The predominant activity during the 2006-early 2009 was VGF, the most appropriate response considering the devastating impact of the political and economic shocks. The level of assistance was based on evidence and was well modulated as the situation changed. In the 2009-2010 period, the CO seized opportunities to expand and pilot new activities (FFA/CFA and cash transfers). The nutrition support to ART and chronically ill people were also relevant in Zimbabwe given the high number of HIV infected people and TB patients.

**Efficiency.** The large share of the regional/local procurement (some 95% of the total) is a major contributor to the general efficiency of the portfolio. The food assistance delivered to the beneficiaries under the two PRROs was below WFP corporate average cost. Pipeline breaks were rare, except in mid-2009 for cereals as costs increased on the world market. Alternative financing mechanisms, together with stringent austerity measures made it possible to maintain core activities.

**Effectiveness and Impact.** The effectiveness of the country portfolio was generally positive, while impact was harder to assess because outcome indicators were not systematically collected and some activities such as FFA/CFA, were introduced recently. For VGF the assistance package was appropriate, well targeted geographically and delivered to the right people using the right mechanisms. The assistance provided to nutrition support to ART had good results, but the evaluation observed that some technical issues related to the entry and exit criteria required a more careful

review to understand their impact on the programme.

**Sustainability.** The majority of the portfolio was in response to a food security emergency and therefore not expected to result in a sustainable outcome. However the activities that were intended to be sustainable (the health and nutrition support for HIV and TB infected people, and CFC for example) only had a limited contribution against that criterion.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Overall Assessment

The overall assessment is positive. The CO managed to navigate through a very challenging period and appropriately adjusted its portfolio activities. WFP Zimbabwe maintained effective dialogue with government and other stakeholders which helped improved coordination and yielded tangible results. Finally, timely support from RB and HQ ensured success in adjusting some activities and developing others. Specific issues however need to be addressed such as methodological issues limiting the effectiveness of the ZIMVAC rural assessment, and the limited performance of the nutrition support to ART.

### Recommendations

The CO should :

- R1.** Continue to actively leverage its experience, expertise, credibility, and strategic position for the development and implementation of a national social protection framework.
- R2.** Incorporate in the next Country Strategy Document a plan for a transition that is consistent with the movement from humanitarian assistance to development, but maintains the capacity to scale up if the political or economic situation significantly deteriorates.
- R3.** Expand its operational relationships on nutrition support for PLHIV and FFA/CFA beneficiaries with UNICEF, FAO and other United Nations agencies, donors and cooperating partners, including joint work planning of specific activities.
- R4.** Continue and explore increasing the share of market-based instruments in its portfolio.
- R5.** Continue to support the ZIMVAC annual rural assessments, but advocate with partners for several significant changes to the method and process.
- R6.** Continue to provide food assistance to malnourished chronically ill people, but the activity should be reviewed before it is expanded.
- R7.** Intensify its efforts to synchronize the registration of beneficiaries of WFP and others' programmes to ensure proper coverage and maximization of synergies between programs.
- R8.** Streamline the negotiation and completion of Field Level Agreements to facilitate the decision-making process and faster start-up by cooperating partners.



#### Reference:

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

[www.wfp.org/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/evaluation)

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