

Evaluation Brief



Evaluation of the Impact of Food for Assets on Livelihood Resilience in Guatemala (2003-2010)

Context

Despite its classification as a middle income country, Guatemala remains one of the poorest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and has one of the world's highest levels of inequality. The chronic undernutrition rate among children under 5 in indigenous areas is the eighth highest in the world. Guatemala is prone to recurrent hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, landslides and droughts, and is highly susceptible to the effects of climate change.

Food for Assets in Guatemala

The evaluation covered the food for assets component of WFP Guatemala Country Programme 10092 (2003-2005) and the Guatemala component of the Regional Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation 10444 (2007-2010). FFA beneficiary numbers ranged from a high of 34,778 in 2009 to a low of 2,224 in 2005.

Participants were supported with food during the lean season complemented by training. A wide variety of mainly individual household assets were built, focused on improving agricultural land stability and productivity. Training focused on disaster response, improving community organization, asset maintenance and women's ownership of assets.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

This evaluation assessed the outcomes and impacts of WFP's food-for-assets programming in Guatemala and was part of a series of five evaluations on the impact of WFP's cash-for-assets and food-for-assets activities on livelihoods resilience. Other countries in the series include Bangladesh, Nepal, Uganda and Senegal. A synthesis of all five countries will also be conducted. The evaluation emphasized learning by identifying lessons and changes for enhancing the impacts on resilience and aligning food-for-assets programming with WFP's recently adopted 2011 Food for Assets Guidance Manual and Disaster Risk Reduction Policy.

The evaluation addressed three core questions:

1. What positive and negative impacts have FFA activities had on individuals within participating households and communities?

2. What factors were critical in affecting outcomes and impacts?
3. How could FFA activities be improved to address the findings from the first two questions?

The lack of baseline and endline data made impact measurement problematic; thus a mixed method approach was used, including household survey (1200 respondents), focus groups, asset assessments, key informant interviews and social and institutional analysis.

Key Findings

Assessment of impact was constrained by lack of data, but comparative cross-sectional analysis indicated the following:

In the short-term food was distributed to approximately 90,000 people, 42% of whom were women, thus filling a food gap in the lean season. Lack of monitoring data constrained the ability to assess short term food security impact, but from household survey responses, there were **no significant differences in food consumption scores or dietary diversity** between participants and comparison groups.

Most assets, such as home gardens, forestry activities, composting and erosion barriers or terraces, remained functional. Household assets had **higher survival rates** than community assets. Larger infrastructure such as barriers or terraces achieved greater productivity and long-term potential, but were also more difficult to construct and maintain. Families have an important role in asset maintenance.

Highly significant **positive impacts on livelihoods** were reported with 77 percent of participant households reporting livelihood improvements in recent years against only 31 percent in comparison groups. Participant households also reported significantly **less migration** than comparison groups.

Positive **biophysical** impacts were observed, with most households reporting improved soil conservation, agricultural productivity and vegetation coverage.

Participants received training to improve organizational capacity and were more involved in community organizations than comparison groups.

WFP adjusted some activities to facilitate women's participation and women's empowerment reportedly increased, although 40 of women indicated the need to reorganize or reassign their daily activities to participate in food for asset activities. WFP did not always meet its targets for women's leadership in food distribution committees or for the percentage of women participants relative to the total.

Communities experienced a range of disasters in recent years. Self-assessed disaster preparedness was significantly higher among participant than comparison households. However, fewer than 30 percent of beneficiaries reported reduced disaster losses because of FFA activities, and community leaders reported that communities remain vulnerable and ill-prepared to face recurrent disasters.

Projects experienced shortfalls in budgets and commodities in most years. Interventions were short and delivered a wide range of assets, many of which were household-level demonstrations of practices such as home gardens and composting. These benefitted individual women and their households, but a more comprehensive, larger-scale approach would be needed to reduce overall vulnerability especially in light of Guatemala's vulnerability to negative effects of climate change. WFP needs adequate human resources and technical support to address this challenge.

WFP was seen as an active and fair player in Guatemala, and WFP interventions complemented government plans and priorities. However more binding and mutually accountable partnership agreements, including for maintenance would enhance sustainability. Reframing FFA as an effective mechanism for disaster risk reduction and response would bring activities into line with WFP's current policy and guidance and build on WFP's comparative advantages.

Recommendations

R 1: The CO should reframe its FFA programming towards disaster risk reduction and response. It should develop a strategy and action plan for its FFA approach and prioritize, design and align these to Guatemala's diverse environmental, risk and vulnerability contexts. It should include specific plans for enhancing disaster risk reduction and response capacity tailored to the community, municipal and national levels; establishing effective

partnerships to ensure the requisite technical skills; and developing staff capacity to enable WFP to play a leadership role with national government and international institutions.

R 2: The CO should concentrate its efforts on fewer, larger and longer-term interventions in fewer communities, with clear criteria for targeting communities at risk of food insecurity and disasters. The focus should be on selecting assets that are likely to help prevent disaster damage and maintain food security when disaster strikes; that are appropriate for the particular conditions of each area; and that ensure balance among short-, medium- and longer-term benefits.

R 3: The CO should develop a broad vision and framework for gender issues in FFA, focusing on household food and nutrition requirements during and after emergencies and taking into consideration women's needs, interests and roles in food and nutrition security. Rigorous analysis should be undertaken to identify barriers to women's empowerment and ways of engaging men in the elimination of these barriers. Women should be fully integrated into FFA decision-making processes to enhance the potential for empowerment.

R 4: The CO should develop longer-term and stronger partnerships at the national, municipal and community levels to ensure that assets are well designed, constructed and maintained. The CO should implement a strategy for the knowledge transfer of successful FFA interventions to government partners, emphasizing sustainability at the national, municipal and community levels. It should also develop a clear cooperation strategy for the municipal level and protocols for cooperation to clarify responsibilities for food delivery, technical assistance, and follow-up, maintenance and monitoring at the community level.

R 5: The CO should develop and implement a robust and systematic FFA monitoring and evaluation system to measure the intended biophysical and socio-economic effects and provide adequate data at the community/municipal level to facilitate ownership and sustainability.



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