

Evaluation Brief

WFP Office of Evaluation: *Measuring Results, Sharing Lessons*



Burundi: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011-2015)

Context

Burundi is a low-income, land-locked country with per capita gross national income of USD 758.¹ Agriculture is the backbone of the economy, accounting for 90 percent of the population's income.² Estimated at 11 million, the population has been growing by 3.51% a year, and population density is the second highest in sub-Saharan Africa.³ Gender inequality is a major contributing factor to food insecurity; Burundi was classified 109th of 155 countries in the Gender Inequality Index.⁴ With the highest levels of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa,⁵ approximately 3 million – 32% – of Burundi's population were food-insecure in 2014, with an additional 4 million experiencing marginal or limited food security.⁶ Malnutrition is a major problem, with very high stunting prevalence of 58 percent and an underweight rate of 29%.⁷ Internal conflict, political uncertainty and weak institutional capacity have constrained economic development.

WFP Country Strategy and Portfolio in Burundi

The (2011-14) Country Strategy (CS) articulated WFP's role as a supporting partner to the Government in facilitating Burundi's move towards lasting peace and sustainable improvement of nutrition and food security. Reflecting the optimistic development vision that prevailed in the Government and among UN partners (UNDAF), WFP's CS identified three priorities: i) food and nutrition security; ii) capacity development; and iii) humanitarian response action. WFP implemented a portfolio comprising a Country Programme (2011-2016), PRRO 200164 and PRRO 200655, ending in 2016, and the short-term immediate-response EMOP 200678. Of an aggregate planned target of 4.3 million people, WFP provided food assistance to 3.6 million (84%) in northern, north-eastern and southern parts of Burundi. Only 61 % of the total required budget of USD 287 million, or USD 175.4 million was received.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The CPE covered the period 2011-2015. Focusing on the portfolio as a whole, the evaluation assessed: i) the alignment and strategic positioning of WFP's CS and Portfolio; ii) the factors and quality of strategic decision-making; and iii) the performance and results of the WFP portfolio.

Key Findings

Alignment and Strategic Positioning

The themes of the CS and the corresponding portfolio were relevant to the identified needs of the population and aligned with WFP corporate policy objectives and government priorities. The CS in Burundi, which WFP saw as a "challenge for innovation", reflected optimistic perspectives towards development, taking into account WFP's comparative advantages. The evaluation found widespread appreciation among stakeholders for WFP's expertise in food assistance, policy support, flexibility and transparency.

The CS was coherent with the priorities of a wide range of United Nations partners and donors. WFP actively participated in UNDAF processes, reported as being transparent and harmonized with national development priorities. Considering the recurrent climatic shocks and the fragile wider context for food security, the CO should be commended for insisting on including an emergency response component in the CS and the UNDAF despite the optimistic spirit at the time of their design. The CO identified activities where synergies with partner United Nations agencies were expected. While considered **gender** as cross-cutting, the CS did not explicitly elaborate it. Analysis of gender in food security issues was limited.

Factors and quality of Strategic Decision-Making

The decision-making process for formulation of the CS was well documented, mitigating the limited "institutional memory" within the CO that resulted from staff turnover over the CS period. Strategic decision-making was both policy-led and practical, influenced by: i) WFP's mandate; ii) national context and policies; iii) WFP's strategic shift from food aid to food assistance; and iv) funding availability.

The country office analysed the political, security and socio-economic context thoroughly, based on its own expertise, comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis from 2008, internal studies⁸ and external analyses from partners including UNDP and the World Bank. Lessons learned, comparative advantages and challenges were also appropriately analysed. To the extent that lessons from other countries could be applied in Burundi, Brazil and Côte d'Ivoire were considered as references for school feeding, and Kenya for P4P.

In 2011-2012, operational design and activities were geographically and conceptually separate, as programming did not integrate portfolio activities to achieve catalytic effects. In 2013, the CO introduced significant revisions including the integration of SF with P4P and home-grown school feeding, the use of vouchers in refugee camps; synchronization of supplementary feeding, school feeding and food assistance for assets (FFA) with the 18-month reintegration plan for returnees from Tanzania, and the revision of PRRO 200655 when the 2015 emergency food security assessment triggered an increase in targeted food assistance. The evaluation found no evidence of internal duplications of geographical targeting, but gaps remained in coordination and coherence among activities.

Portfolio Performance and Results

Effectiveness

In 2011 and 2012, the country office effectively met or exceeded planned targets in school feeding, general food assistance (GFA), P4P, to a lower degree in FFA and nutrition. However, in later years, its ability to meet targets declined. Outcome indicators were not consistently collected and analysed.

GFA was provided to 953,376 internally displaced persons

¹ <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BDI>

² <http://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/burundi/burundi-economic-outlook-2014>.

³ <http://countrymeters.info/en/Burundi>

⁴ UNDP. 2015. *Human Development Report 2015*.

⁵ International Food Policy Research Institute. 2014. *Global Hunger Index 2014*.

⁶ WFP. 2014. *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis 2014*.

⁷ WHO threshold for "very high/alarming" stunting is 40%. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2014. *The State of the World's Children 2015*, p. 42.

(IDPs), refugees and vulnerable households, of whom 165,288 benefited from cash based transfers (CBTs). However, performance by year was erratic. WFP supported the implementation of a national social protection programme, contributing its experience in VAM, targeting and CBTs.

P4P - Focusing largely on local purchase of 20,032 metric ton, P4P supported almost 14,000 farmers in cooperatives; and injected a significant amount of cash in the local economy, valued at USD 4.75 million.

Community Recovery - With the objective of restoring and enhancing community resilience to shocks, WFP supported 242,029 participants in FFA activities such as construction of feeder roads and erosion protection – considered highly relevant in Burundi. Performance was stable but activities reached only a relatively low 71% of planned coverage. Although not measured consistently, associated Community Asset Scores indicated modest improvements, (58% - 63%), towards the 80% target.

School Feeding programme contributed to increased enrolment and attendance in assisted schools, with lower drop-outs and gender parity. Activities met 98% of planned targets and provided children with daily hot meals for 9.5 months of each school year, although this was reduced to 6 months during funding shortfalls in 2015. Performance was stable.

Nutrition - With fluctuating performance, activities supported 412,761 children & pregnant and lactating women – meeting 71% of the planned target; 10,231 people living with HIV on anti-retroviral therapy (35% of planned); and provided training in stunting prevention to 33 health technicians and 1,582 community health workers. The evaluation found insufficient data to assess effectiveness of nutrition interventions.

Capacity development – A number of national policies and strategies were successfully developed with WFP’s assistance; including Burundi’s first Forum on Nutrition and Food Security in 2011, and to policy formulation for food fortification, school feeding, community development, gender and Disaster Risk Reduction. While mainstreamed across operations, this activity was relatively small in scale and insufficiently frequent.

Humanitarian Response Action: In 2014, the country office diligently applied its logistical capacity for humanitarian response as a strong comparative advantage; and effectively delivered 418 metric ton of life-saving general food assistance to 22,160 IDPs affected by flooding. However, the response did not ensure linkages with recovery and sustainability activities.

Targeting – Based on a transparent community participatory approach, beneficiary targeting criteria were well defined for all groups. Criteria were relevant and flexible for potentially large-scale coverage of beneficiaries; although in some cases their application varied. Targeting was implemented following humanitarian and protection principles.

Efficiency

The evaluation assessed that despite some operational delays in food dispatches and delivery, overall, WFP’s delivery of assistance was timely. However, there were trade-offs between increasing beneficiary coverage and reducing the quantities of food distributed and the duration of distributions.

Sustainability

Like performance and results, sustainability was constrained by weak national institutional capacities, exacerbated by high turnover among government staff, the chronically challenging context, and funding shortfalls. The evaluation did not find evidence of sustainable results except, potentially, in P4P, when

combined with endogenous school feeding. The hand-over of vulnerability analysis and mapping and logistics to national ministries envisaged in the CS did not materialize.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall Assessment

WFP’s 1st CS in Burundi added value to its positioning and alignment, making optimal differences compared with the project-based approaches prior to 2010. The CS was relevant in reflecting the strategic shift towards long-term development in Burundi. It was realistic and far-sighted in its insistence on maintaining an emergency component. At strategic level, stakeholders perceived WFP as a leading and influential partner. The CO was renowned for its logistics, VAM, disaster response and capacity to act as a catalyst in innovative endeavours such as P4P, and for excellent relations with its national and international stakeholders. Burundi stands at a cross-roads of uncertainty over whether long-term development will resume or instability deteriorate further.

Recommendation 1. Maintain the two CS priorities – i) food and nutrition security; and ii) emergency preparedness and response – in a two-pronged strategic approach. Include readiness to respond more effectively to current challenges; mainstream capacity development as a cross-cutting theme in the new CSP and operations. Externally, strengthen synergies with national strategic partners complemented by institutional advocacy for synergies on major food security issues.

Recommendation 2. Internally, strengthen geographical and programme integration through better-targeted multi-sectoral operational planning. Strengthen coordination with government and non-government implementing partners.

Recommendation 3. Enhance women’s economic empowerment through gender-sensitive income-generating activities and the formation of partnerships.

Recommendation 4. Expand carefully designed safety nets for social protection programming to respond to population needs arising from the crisis and adhering to humanitarian and protection principles. Explicitly include the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence, and protection in WFP strategic and programme documents.

Recommendation 5. Enhance CO’ role in nutrition through: i) consistent application of WFP nutrition guidelines; ii) a continuum of care services at health centres and in communities integrating nutrition with access to food; iii) support to the development of a national stunting reduction strategy, while continuing to promote the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement; iv) improving monitoring, evaluation and analysis of nutrition outcome data; and v) advocating for the engagement of young people in prevention of malnutrition.

Recommendation 6. Support national school feeding programmes in partnership for greater focus on education quality, through gap analysis and mapping. Internally, strengthen linkages with P4P to deliver a standard package to targeted schools.

Recommendation 7. Support communities by integrating comprehensive and sustainable FFA packages into community development plans.

Recommendation 8. Update the country office’s resource mobilization strategy and advocate for more flexibility in donor funding, allowing multi-year resource commitments.

Recommendation 9. Enhance the consistency of outcome data monitoring and analysis

Reference:

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

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