



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP EVALUATION

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Lessons on Community Engagement in West and Central Africa

World Food Programme (WFP) is committed to engaging the communities in which its programmes are carried out, and has become more and more focused on strengthening its policies, strategies, standards, methodologies, and systems to increase accountability to affected populations (AAP). Community engagement is indeed one of the main means to achieve AAP, but WFP engages with communities also to other ends, notably to increase programme quality, efficiency and sustainability. WFP launched its Community Engagement Strategy for AAP 2021-2026, building on concepts defined within the WFP protection and AAP policy. It focuses on three commitment areas: inclusion; community feedback and response; and the management of information and knowledge.

PURPOSE AND FOCUS

This summary of evaluation evidence was undertaken to take stock of how community engagement is put into practice by WFP in West and Central Africa, document WFP achievements and highlight common challenges. It should help fill a knowledge gap in how WFP operations in West and Central Africa make progress towards the community engagement standards set by WFP and the international humanitarian community. It is intended to serve as a knowledge management product and may support the development of and advocacy for guidance documents and investment cases. Finally, this summary identifies existing evidence gaps and, therefore, may inform future evaluation work on the topic of community engagement.

Commissioned by the WFP Office of Evaluation

5 KEY FINDINGS

1 EVALUATION FINDINGS ARE POSITIVE ON WFP'S INCLUSION OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS AT THE PROGRAMME PLANNING STAGE BUT HIGHLIGHT CHALLENGES IN THE CAPACITIES OF AND HARMONIZATION WITH PARTNERS.

- Evidence on community involvement in decision making related to the programmes is generally positive, particularly when communities are engaged for community-based participatory planning or pursuing targeting exercises.
- When conducted ahead of asset creation activities, community-based participatory planning has supported effectiveness. Evidence suggests, however, there is room for integrating results of community consultations much earlier in the elaboration process when planning new asset creation or livelihood support interventions.
- Community-based participatory planning could yield better results if:
 - capacities of cooperating partners and community stakeholders for conducting the planning exercise are strengthened
 - community engagement approaches are harmonized with other agencies or with partners operating in similar locations.

November 2023

2 **COUNTRY OFFICES HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY FEEDBACK MECHANISMS BUT DEVELOPING THEIR EFFECTIVENESS STILL REQUIRES ATTENTION.**

- The complexity of operational environments influences the effectiveness of Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFM). For example, CFM systems are hard to manage in intervention zones where humanitarian access is constrained.
- There are two main recurrent challenges:
 - ensuring community awareness of the mechanisms;
 - providing timely and quality feedback, which encompasses communication efforts between WFP and its partners.

3 **THERE IS ROOM TO IMPROVE CFM INCLUSIVENESS, AND COMMUNITIES' INFORMATION ON AND SENSITIZATION OF WFP'S PROJECT:**

- The extent to which communities are continuously informed about different aspects of WFP programmes during their implementation is reported negatively. Evaluations underline communication deficits to partners and affected populations, most notably related to decisions on targeting or ration cuts, while surfacing community concerns around communication flows.
- The degree of inclusiveness of community engagement mechanisms, like community representative groups, and of CFM is insufficient, both from a gender perspective, and in relation to other marginalized groups, with few positive exceptions.
- WFP needs to make a plurality of channels available to communities, to ensure access and use of CFM by all groups.

4 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CAN HAVE A PIVOTAL INFLUENCE ON THE QUALITY OF WFP PROGRAMMES.**

- Investing in community engagement is an enabler of sustainability for school canteens and for other livelihood-support interventions. Gains include increased community ownership, social cohesion and snowball benefits in terms of community contributions to programme design and effectiveness.
- Sub-optimal community engagement affects programme quality and negatively impacts outcomes, affecting sustainability prospects, when programmes are not well informed by consultations with the affected population. Inadequate community engagement also has important repercussions on the understanding and acceptance of targeting criteria, which in turn has resulted in tensions amongst community groups. Finally, inadequate community engagement can lead to unmitigated protection risks for WFP's target populations.

5 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOCUS ON THREE MAIN ASPECTS, CALLING FOR:**

- Strengthening CFM systems, which in some cases calls for reviewing corresponding standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Reassessing and strengthening partnerships for community engagement activities
- Reviewing and refining community-based participatory planning practices and strengthening capacities in this regard.

BREADTH OF EVIDENCE

This summary presents evaluation evidence from 26 evaluations from the West and Central Africa Region published between 2019 and 2022. It also includes evidence from one strategic evaluation on technology in constrained environments, in which Niger has been selected as a case study. Findings are closely tied to the available evaluation evidence and may not reflect a holistic view of the progress of WFP in the region against WFP's community engagement standards.



The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.

ANNEX ■ LIST OF EVALUATIONS CONSULTED

- [Évaluation décentralisée conjointe finale du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré \(PNASI\) au Bénin - 2017 à 2021](#)
- [Évaluation du Plan Stratégique Pays provisoire du PAM en République centrafricaine \(2018-2022\)](#)
- [Evaluation of Cameroon WFP Country Strategic Plan 2018-2020](#)
- [Evaluation of Chad WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023](#)
- [Evaluation of Mauritania WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022](#)
- [Evaluation of Nigeria WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2022](#)
- [The Gambia WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2021](#)
- [Baseline Evaluation of USDA McGovern-Dole-funded "Support for the Integrated School Feeding Program" in Cote d'Ivoire \(2021-2025\)](#)
- [Final evaluation of the first phase of the McGovern-Dole Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Côte d'Ivoire, 2015-2021](#)
- [Evaluation thématique des activités de renforcement des capacités institutionnelles en Guinée de juillet 2019 à juin 2021](#)
- [Formative Evaluation of Livelihoods Activities in Northeast Nigeria 2018 to 2020](#)
- [Final Evaluation of Enhanced Nutrition and Value Chains \(ENVAC\) project 2016-2021](#)
- [Évaluation décentralisée de la contribution du PAM au Système de Protection Sociale Adaptative \(SPSA\) en Mauritanie depuis 2018](#)
- [Midterm Evaluation of Nutrition Activities in The Gambia 2016-2019](#)
- [Final Evaluation of McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program in Guinea-Bissau, 2016-2019](#)
- [WFP's Use of Technology in Constrained Environments \(Niger country case study\)](#)
- [Evaluation conjointe à mi-parcours du Programme National d'Alimentation Scolaire Intégré \(PNASI\) Aout 2017 - Mai 2019](#)
- [Evaluation Décentralisée « Projet lait » au sein du programme d'alimentation scolaire du PAM dans la région du Sahel, Burkina Faso, de 2017 à 2019](#)
- [Evaluation thématique sur les questions de genre dans les interventions du PAM au Burkina Faso \(2016-2018\)](#)
- [Mid-term Evaluation of McGovern-Dole Funded School Feeding Project in Guinea-Bissau, 2016-2019](#)
- [Togo, Capacity Strengthening in School Feeding: an evaluation](#)
- [FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of DEVCO-funded resilience activity in northern Mali](#)
- [Évaluation à mi-parcours de l'Intervention prolongée de secours et de redressement \(IPSR\) Niger 200961 \(Janvier 2017 - Décembre 2019\) et de la dernière année de l'IPSR 200583 \(Janvier 2014 - Décembre 2016\)](#)
- [Cote d'Ivoire PRRO 200464: a decentralized evaluation](#)

WFP EVALUATION

- 🌐 wfp.org/independent-evaluation
- ✉ wfp.evaluation@wfp.org
- 🐦 [@WFP_Evaluation](https://twitter.com/WFP_Evaluation)
- 📍 Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68/70, 00148 Rome, Italy
- ☎ T +39 06 65131