

Evaluation of capacity strengthening activities to government and local communities in Sao Tome and Principe from July 2019 to December 2022

Decentralized Evaluation Terms of Reference

WFP Sao Tome & Principe Country Office



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1. Background

1. These terms of reference (ToR) were prepared by the WFP Sao Tome & Principe (STP) and Cameroon Country Offices based upon an initial document review and consultation with stakeholders and Partners. The purpose of these terms of reference is to provide key information to stakeholders about the WFP STP Country Capacity Strengthening Decentralized Evaluation, to guide the evaluation team and to specify expectations during the various phases of the evaluation.

1.1. INTRODUCTION

2. These terms of reference are for the thematic evaluation of WFP Country Capacity Strengthening activities to the government and local communities in all districts of Sao Tome & Principe. This evaluation is commissioned by WFP STP Country Office and will cover the period from July 2019 to December 2022.

1.2. CONTEXT

3. The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe (STP) is a lower-middle-income island state situated in the Gulf of Guinea, off the western coast of Central Africa. The country consists of two main islands (Sao Tome and Principe), located about 140 km apart with a land area of just over 1,000 km. As a small island developing state, the country faces various challenges. Due to its insularity and geographical location, Sao Tome and Principe is prone to climatic shocks and natural disasters and is vulnerable to market price fluctuation, which negatively impacts the subsistence conditions of its population and further increases their food insecurity.
4. In 2019, STP Government has integrated the 2030 Agenda and has adopted the zero-hunger strategic review (ZHSR) report in April 2018 as a road map for achieving zero hunger in the country. The ZHSR identified challenges, inefficiencies and gaps at various levels (legal, strategic, policy framework and operational). Gender inequalities have also been identified as cross cutting issue namely, access to food, school meals, nutrition, smallholder productivity and information systems.
5. Access to food: Food and nutrition insecurity in Sao Tome and Principe are the result of factors such as high unemployment rates and the weak performance of the agriculture, fishing and livestock sectors. These lead to limited food production and access to basic services; heavy reliance on food imports, which exposes the country to fluctuating food prices, affecting principally the livelihoods of the poor; and lack of access to education, employment, financial services and means of production (including land and agricultural resources), which affects women and men at different levels throughout their lives.
6. School meals: Challenges related to school meals include a lack of a national school meals strategy; inadequate consideration of school meals in national priorities and budgets; limited government capacity to manage school meals operations effectively and equitably; inadequate funding mechanisms; logistical challenges hindering food deliveries at schools; the inability to determine accurately the cost of a school meals programme and the extent and inclusiveness of community participation; weak civil society mobilization to support a transition towards national ownership, including community contributions and parents' associations; and heavy reliance on a food basket composed of imported foods such as rice, beans, salt and vegetable oil. There is a need to develop a full-fledged home-grown school meals (HGSM) approach that is gender-transformative and has a strong focus on the direct procurement of locally produced nutritious food.
7. Nutrition: Factors contributing to nutrition insecurity in Sao Tome and Principe include the insufficient number of nutritionists in the country; the need for gender-aware communication strategies to promote infant and young child feeding and maternal nutrition practices; the need to reinforce nutrition education for adolescents (as future parents and in a gender-transformative manner);

insufficient commitment to prioritizing the first 1,000 days of life (i.e., from conception to age 2); and insufficient emphasis on food fortification programmes.

8. **Smallholder productivity:** Smallholder productivity is hindered by underdeveloped and poorly integrated agriculture markets; the lack of a gender-equitable policy to protect and provide incentives to farmers and fishers; disorganized, inefficient and unrepresentative smallholder farmer associations (particularly for women); the need to improve infrastructure to connect production sites and markets; a critical lack of reliable agriculture data; an insufficient workforce and limited technical capacity;⁴⁵ and the lack of a value chain for nutritious food. As highlighted by the ZHSR, the low levels of agricultural productivity are caused by poor infrastructure, insufficient buy-in from the Government, grossly inadequate scientific research and too few small-scale farmers. There are just 8,955 small-scale farmers (30 percent of whom are women),⁴⁶ and they are excluded from discussions concerning agriculture and rural development policies.
9. **Coordination:** Challenges related to coordination include the limited coordination capacities and resources of the national Council for Food and Nutrition Security (Conselho de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional or CONSAN); the limited technical and financial capacity of the Government to implement existing programmes; and a lack of sustained, evidence-based advocacy to enhance awareness of food and nutrition security issues.
10. **Information systems:** Information systems are hindered by a lack of periodic food security and nutrition data for the country, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress in food security and nutrition until 2030, a production and commercialization pricing system, and data and analysis disaggregated by gender and age.
11. **Complementing the Government's efforts,** WFP has provided support in line with the national context. Over the years, WFP's operations transitioned from providing direct food assistance to strengthening national institutional capacities. Although the school feeding programme managed by WFP was handed over to the Government since 2015, the latter still faces some operational and financial hardships. Moreover, several challenges and gaps related to food insecurity and nutrition were identified by the ZHSR report and during consultations with the Government and stakeholders to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 17 in Sao Tome and Principe. In line with the findings and leveraging on WFP's position as the Government's partner of choice, WFP has strengthened national capacities to autonomously implement the school feeding programme and improve market access for smallholder farmers. On 30 June 2019, WFP successfully concluded the implementation of the transitional-interim country strategic plan and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education through the National School Feeding, and Health Programme (PNASE) remained WFP's main partner. Partnerships were also strengthened with the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition (CONSAN) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development through the Rural Development Support Centre (CADR). In line with the work plan, WFP funded and facilitated a number of capacities strengthening activities with PNASE, including the reactivation of the school gardens, awareness campaigns on the importance of consuming of local products in school menus, revision of the school feeding law and the provision of assets and equipment to improve their performance in implementing socially sustainable nutrition-sensitive and smallholder-friendly home-grown school feeding programme, as well as related food security and nutrition policies and programmes nationwide. The government has been able to see the linkages between small holder farmer systems with school feeding programme as means to rely school feeding meals on local products.
12. In addition, WFP supported the national Government with necessary tools and assets that will allow coordinate and strengthened Government capacities in providing incentives for sustainable and equitable local food value chains and stimulating smallholder agricultural markets, including the establishment of a data collection and management information system for the Ministry of Agriculture, funded training sessions organized by CADR to its personnel on sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural techniques, provided assets and equipment to support production activities of men and women smallholders and stimulate their access to markets and funded various data collection activities. WFP also supported to the promotion of national dialogue about food security and nutrition in the country, including the need to encourage women smallholders to deliver healthy and quality products to school canteens was also made by WFP.

13. WFP repositioned itself in 2020 to ensure prompt alignment to the Government's agenda, along with ensuring strategic response to unexpected challenges and capacity gaps identified by the main national and regional actors. WFP focuses on strengthening national capacities to enable them implement sustainable solutions for addressing food insecurity and drive full government ownership in the areas of school feeding and smallholder's agriculture. WFP strengthened its partnership with the key government ministries and stakeholders and reinforced collaboration with other development partners including UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). The Country office played a crucial role in the coordination of humanitarian air flights to Sao Tome and Principe during closure of the country borders.
14. However, despite the strategic and programmatic challenges and the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020 that resulted in an unprecedented socio-economic crisis, WFP was able to provide country capacity strengthening continue support the main Government counterparts. In Sao Tome, there was a favourable environment for WFP as a resident UN agency to strengthen its partnership with the Government, UN partners and other development actors including national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and to promote the collaboration between the different actors involved in food security and nutrition through a whole society approach. WFP was able to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE); the National School Feeding and Health programme (PNASE); the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development (MAFRD); the National Support Centre for Rural Development (CADR); and the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition (CONSAN), in support of the national development priorities. WFP supported the (i) revision of the National School Feeding and Health programme Law, (ii) the development of the information management system for the MAFRD, (iii) promoted training sessions for CADR personnel and for smallholder farmers, and (iv) supported awareness and sensitization campaigns in collaboration with CONSAN and the National Nutrition Programme (PNN) about food security and nutrition.
15. Gender was mainstreamed in all WFP interventions, particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak. WFP supported the Government in ensuring food security of vulnerable households, with focus on female-headed households who were most affected by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. Insufficient funding remained one of the major strategic risks for WFP Sao Tome and Principe.
16. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued impacting the economy and the livelihoods of the most vulnerable people, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The Government requested assistance from humanitarian and development partners, including WFP, with a view to minimizing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. In this regard, WFP scaled up its operations under strategic outcome 2 which aimed to provide food and nutrition assistance to crisis-affected populations through in-kind transfers and increased its efforts to mobilize resources to assist 50,000 school-aged children nationwide. In May 2021, WFP signed a partnership agreement with Chellaram Foundation and received USD 700,000 to assist 25,000 schoolchildren. Through this contribution, WFP was able to distribute nutritious food in the form of alternative take-home rations, as well as hygiene kits (such as face masks and hand sanitizers) to 5,000 vulnerable school children (2,550 girls and 2,450 boys). This contribution also allowed WFP to procure and deliver 395 metric tons of food commodities to government warehouses for on-site school meals across 127 schools, including pre-schools and primary schools. On-site school feeding will start in January 2022 with the resumption of the National School Feeding and Health Program (PNASE) and will benefit 20,000 school children for five months. Despite pandemic-related challenges, WFP also contributed to strengthening the Government's capacity in the areas of home-grown school feeding (HGSF), smallholder farmers' access to markets, and the food security and nutrition of the population. To this end, WFP implemented innovative capacity strengthening initiatives, such as activating community school gardens to ensure the sustainability of the national school feeding programme, carrying out an agricultural assessment and territorial diagnosis to collect disaggregated data on smallholders' productivity and capacity needs, and on territorial characteristics to inform national development strategies and plans. In addition, WFP retrofitted Government warehouses to ensure that food commodities are stored in adequate conditions and facilitated national dialogue on food security and nutrition through the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition (CONSAN). Contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships), WFP strengthened its existing partnerships and made progress towards new strategic partnerships with the private sector and non-traditional donors.

In this regard, both capacity strengthening and emergency school feeding activities were implemented by WFP in close collaboration with various stakeholders, including the Chellaram Foundation, the African Development Bank, national government and public entities, the PNASE, the CONSAN, education directorates, as well as civil society organizations, including parents' associations. The activities implemented by WFP in 2021 also contributed to improved gender equality outcomes, especially for schoolboys and schoolgirls. Notably, WFP's emergency school feeding intervention and the community school gardens targeted vulnerable boys and girls to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on their wellbeing through nutritious food. Other partners also contributed to the containment and mitigation of the COVID19 pandemic impact whereby, for example in the last quarter of 2020, as part of the back-to-school campaign implemented in partnership with UNICEF, 47 Metric Tonnes of food commodities were delivered to vulnerable children.

2. Reasons for the evaluation

2.1. RATIONALE

17. The evaluation is being commissioned for the following reasons:
18. Sao Tome & Principe (STP) country Office has initiated the discussions with HQ on the planning of its second generation CSP (aligned to the new UNSDCF) that will be submitted to the Executive Board by November 2023.
19. The evaluation topic will cover WFP capacity strengthening activities and will be used by WFP Sao Tome and Principe (STP) Country Office and the Government to generate the most useful evidence on key achievements and lessons learned from current WFP programmes in the country to inform the design of the new CSP and interventions.
20. As a corporate requirement, WFP conduct at least one Decentralize Evaluation and a CSP Evaluation at the penultimate year of the CSP 2019 – 2024. From the context in STP where the UNCT has elaborated a new UNSDCF, it is important that WFP shorten for 1 year the period of the current CSP, and then design a new one to align with the UNSDCF 2023 - 2026. As such, it is important that the evaluations look at other activities that have been implemented like the in-kind emergency response to school children during the COVID pandemic.
21. The Evaluation will also inform potential areas for WFP programme intervention in the new CSP as per comparative advantage of WFP (Nutrition, etc.)

2.2. OBJECTIVES

22. Evaluations serve the dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of accountability and learning.
 - **Accountability** – The evaluation will assess and report on the performance and results of the WFP Country Capacity Strengthening activities to the government and local communities on the improvement of Home-Grown School Feeding (HGFS), support to smallholder farmers and emergency assistance to school affected children.
 - **Learning** – The evaluation will determine the reasons why certain results occurred or did not occur to draw lessons, derive good practices and provide pointers for learning. It will also provide evidence-based findings to inform operational and strategic decision-making. Findings will be actively disseminated, and lessons will be incorporated into relevant lesson-sharing systems.

Specific objectives

- Measure the overall performance of the capacity strengthening activities, with focus on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, impact and sustainability of the interventions.
- Assess the achievement of results defined by stakeholders, the factors for success and failure of the strategies implemented to achieve the expected results, as well as the geographical coverage of interventions and targets.
- Analyse the involvement and accountability of actors and stakeholders, identify strengths and weaknesses of implementation strategies, difficulties encountered, opportunities and threats to the school feeding policy, agricultural activities, and WFP emergency response.
- Assess the structural and financial sustainability (stakeholders/capacity of actors, modalities of implementation of activities, efforts made by government services, civil society organisations, local communities, and other vulnerable groups)
- Analyse gender equality and women empowerment, including human rights approaches, accessibility to income generating opportunities for women, and environmental sustainability of smallholder farming activities.

- Document best practices, lessons learned in relation to intervention design and implementation, management, which could be used for replication or scaling up.
- Make proposals/recommendations for the improvement of future interventions in terms of programmatic interventions/area as per WFP comparative advantage and in terms of evaluation criteria and implementation strategies.
- Assess the feasibility and implementation status of the government vision to successfully integrate small holder farmer systems with school feeding.
- Assess the opportunities of the Government to base the school feeding meals on local products, influencing dietary habits of children and their parents, incentivizing local small holder farmers to increase their production to meet the additional demand created through this programme and the change in dietary habits.

2.3. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

23. The evaluation will seek the views of, and be useful to, a broad range of WFP internal and external stakeholders. A number of stakeholders will be asked to play a role in the evaluation process in light of their expected interest in the results of the evaluation and relative power to influence the results of the programme being evaluated. Table 1 provides a preliminary stakeholder analysis, which should be deepened by the evaluation team as part of the inception phase.
24. Accountability to affected populations, is tied to WFP commitments to include beneficiaries as key stakeholders in WFP work. WFP is committed to ensuring gender equality, equity and inclusion in the evaluation process, with participation and consultation in the evaluation of women, men, boys and girls from different groups (including persons with disabilities, the elderly and persons with other diversities such as ethnic and linguistic).

Table 1: Preliminary stakeholder analysis

Stakeholders	Interest and involvement in the evaluation
Internal (WFP) stakeholders	
WFP country office (CO) in STP	Key informant and primary stakeholder - Responsible for the planning and implementation of WFP interventions at country level. The country office has an interest in learning from experience to inform decision-making. It is also called upon to account internally as well as to its beneficiaries and partners for performance and results of its programmes. The country office will be involved in using evaluation findings for programme implementation and/or in deciding on the next CSP and partnerships

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