

Operation Evaluation of WFP Colombia PRRO 10588.0

Context

The humanitarian situation facing Colombia after more than 40 years of violence has led to one of the highest rates of displaced persons in the world. WFP works in close collaboration and coordination with the Government of Colombia to serve the displaced and vulnerable population.

WFP PRRO 10588.0: Food Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and Other Highly Food-Insecure Groups Affected by Violence (Apr 2008 – Mar 2011)

In early 2008, the Board approved protracted relief and recovery operation (PRRO) 105880, the fourth operation since 2000 aimed at assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other groups affected by violence in the context of Colombia's humanitarian crisis. The operation's objectives have been to prevent a deterioration of food security, improve the nutritional status of the displaced and support the development of human capital and community assets in a context of long-range recovery. The PRRO places priority on protecting the nutritional status of pregnant and nursing women and of children under the age of 6.

The operation provides food assistance through relief, assistance for children at risk, assistance for pregnant and nursing women, emergency school feeding, and food-for-work (FFW) and food-for-training (FFT) activities. WFP also provides technical assistance, promotes the capacity development of its local and national partners, and participates in promotional and awareness-building campaigns designed to strengthen national food security and nutrition policies. The PRRO focuses on filling gaps in humanitarian assistance and building bridges between beneficiaries and government entities to facilitate dialogue and assistance. For the period from Apr 2008 to Mar 2011, the operation planned to assist, every year, 530,000 IDPs, vulnerable host communities and other groups affected by the internal conflict (confined and blockaded communities) and required 90,086 metric tons of food at a cost of US\$106 million¹.

Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation was to seek to improve future performances of WFP operations by determining the reasons for the success and/or failure and support the internalisation of lessons in new practices. It was also to determine the degree of success and/or failure of the operation and accounts for aid expenditures to stakeholders.

The evaluation covered the period April 2008 to January 2010 and was carried out between January and July 2010 by a team of independent evaluators.

The evaluation report was presented to the Executive Board in November 2010.

Key Findings and Conclusions

Relevance and appropriateness

The operation continues to be relevant to the Colombian situation and to play an important role as part of the humanitarian assistance being provided to the displaced population. The nature of the displacement continues to evolve, and it is crucial that the PRRO acknowledges the importance of maintaining as much flexibility as possible for dealing appropriately with the situation.

Efficiency

The configuration of the PRRO presents some challenges for maximizing efficiency; the operation manages to be efficient through strategic use of the multiplier effect and through partnerships that allow for sharing of logistics costs. It is also clear that WFP functions with a relatively small team given the scope of the operation. The perception of the evaluation team is that the obstacles to increasing efficiency derive, internally, from the need to maintain the flexibility of the PRRO, and, externally, from trends in donor contributions and in WFP financing systems at the global level.

Outputs

The data on effectiveness show a high rate of achievement of the objectives, and indicate that the operation would be accomplishing even more were it not for the budget deficit. Despite the deficit, the operation has provided assistance to 92 percent of the planned beneficiaries, even with only half of the planned volume of food. It was decided to increase activities targeting women and children as much as possible – covering pregnant and nursing women, children at risk, and beneficiaries of school feeding – and to reduce the resources for FFW and FFT. In reality, the latter two activities have served a greater number of beneficiaries than planned, although with smaller rations than in the past, and for shorter periods. Given the intent to make the Government more aware of populations not served by government programmes, it makes sense to try to help the greatest possible number of beneficiaries, even with less food and for shorter periods.

Effectiveness and Impact

The PRRO has had positive effects on the nutrition and health of the beneficiaries and on their quality of life. Emphasis should be given to the role of the PRRO in remedying gaps in assistance, which facilitates transferring beneficiaries to government programmes. In addition, the presence of the PRRO and its mode of operation create a multiplier effect. In many cases, there are indirect effects that are more important than the food distributed. However, these come to light only through informal conversations and anecdotal accounts with key informants. At present the country office data base does not capture this type of information.

Interconnection and Sustainability

It became evident in the course of the mission that operational links with other entities are one of the PRRO's strong points. There are various examples of partnerships created and multiplier effects achieved, but it is difficult to create a document showing the nuances of the process to establish partnerships and/or the extent of the multiplier effect. Moreover, the lessons learned from this PRRO have not yet been systematized to assemble a range of best practices – which would be valuable not only for the staff working on the PRRO but also for WFP efforts around the world.

¹ February 2009 Budget revision

The operation's strategic links have innovative aspects, although they are still in the experimental stage. The relationship with the Colombian Family Welfare Institute and the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation is a first stage in that process of creating strategic links. The next step will be to formalize cooperation agreements with the ministries responsible for those operational programmes, such as the Ministry of Social Protection and the Ministry of Education. Given the size of the teams in the field, it has not been possible to devote adequate time to establishing the link between operations and public policy, but work to create partnerships has intensified, as has the multiplier effect felt in the field every day.

For now, the indicator of hand-over to government programmes is used as an indicator of the sustainability of the design of the PRRO. However, there is no proof that hand-over is equivalent to sustaining the lives of the IDPs.

Recommendations

Programming

The following recommendations might apply more to the next stage of the PRRO, but some of them might be applicable now. Programming officers should look more closely at the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Find a way to expand activities for pregnant and lactating women and at-risk children in rural areas, given the difficulty of ensuring that the activities are linked to effective health care services.

Recommendation 2: Explore the possibility of increasing the impact on women of the activities for pregnant and lactating women. This may be achieved in two ways: i) replacing the individual ration with a family ration; and ii) looking for ways to more explicitly coordinate activities for pregnant and lactating women with other forms of assistance used in any activity carried out at the household level.

Recommendation 3: Devote a larger share of the FFW activities to basic sanitation projects, even though all the outputs of FFW activities are useful.

Recommendation 4: Consider the possibility of focusing more of the FFW activities on programmes, while recognizing in any case that all training can be useful.

Indirect Effects

Given the significant added value that indirect effects provide in the Colombian context, it is important to seek ways to reinforce them through the work of the PRRO. The following recommendations are directed primarily at how to identify and prioritize the indirect effects according to the context.

Recommendation 5: Create more opportunities for cooperating partners to meet each other, not only to draw lessons learned concerning progress on the projects, but also to strengthen links among institutions to ensure the sustainability of the joint effort.

Recommendation 6: Undertake a study to identify and highlight the combined effects of the various kinds of assistance, particularly school feeding and food for assets.

Recommendation 7: Sponsor three market studies on the possible alternatives to distribution of food in kind in order to better programme the alternatives in line with the context.

- i) a study on the viability of increasing the percentage of the budget devoted to local purchases;
- ii) a study on whether and in what way indirect effects are enhanced by purchasing local products supplied by small producers; and
- iii) a study to identify the indirect effects of the use of staple products compared to vouchers.

WFP Country Office Structure

The following recommendations on structure are intended to draw attention to acknowledged structural requirements to address the challenges of managing a PRRO in an evolving context.

Recommendation 8: Consider establishing a stable presence in the eastern part of the country by opening a satellite office to take advantage of the synergy created by the presence of WFP staff and at the same time enhance the indirect effects of protection, greater visibility and strengthening of the social fabric. Perhaps a presence could be established by moving one of the satellite offices currently located in an area where the conflict has ended.

Recommendation 9: Expand the teams of the sub-offices and satellite offices.

Recommendation 10: Foster staff exchanges among sub-offices and satellite offices through project visits in order to appreciate the variety of perspectives provided by the different contexts.

The Country Office Database and Logical Framework

Because the database captures an extraordinary quantity of information it is necessarily mostly descriptive. It would be important to take more advantage of deductive analysis to look more closely at the impact of various activities on programming. Before the end of the PRRO cycle, the follow-up team should undertake the following activities.

Recommendation 11: Establish how to measure the impact indicators already in the logical framework and outline, through a process of deduction, the impact of the various activities and the differences between PRRO beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. It is important that the background studies sponsored by WFP include questions on whether the interviewee was a beneficiary and of what activity.

Recommendation 12: Develop new indicators that make it possible to highlight the PRRO's indirect effects in relation to the context, specifically: visibility, protection, strengthening of the social fabric, the multiplier effect and the establishing of partnerships. It would be worth creating a database that allowed for capturing variations in the number of levels, number of partners, etc., and the degree of leverage achieved. Analysis of other indicators could be added, such as the number of beneficiaries, the different indirect effects, or health practices adopted.

Recommendation 13: Once the hand-over is completed, sponsor a follow-up study on beneficiaries, broken down by activity type, to see more clearly the sustainability of the changes experienced by beneficiaries during project implementation.

Fundraising

Recommendation 14: To promote greater timeliness and predictability of contributions, the country director should formulate a fundraising strategy with the support of the External Relations Department and donors, to diversify the donor base in support of strategic initiatives that the country office considers priorities for the future.

Reference: Full and summary reports of the Evaluation are available at: <http://www.wfp.org/about/evaluation>
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