

OBJECTIVE 2

Prevent Famine and Mitigate Severe Food Insecurity

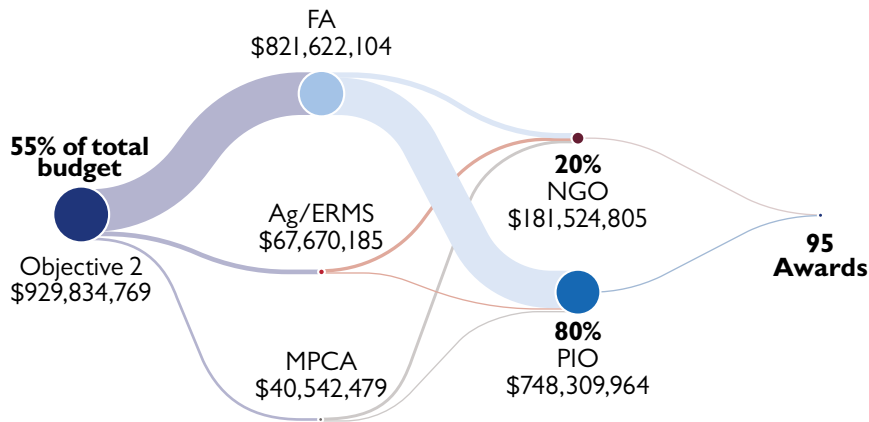
Sub-Objective 2.1: Provide emergency food and/or nutrition security (2.1a) and livelihoods programming (2.1b) for needs exacerbated by pandemic effects

Sectors: Food Assistance (FA), Agriculture (Ag), Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS), Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)

KEY FINDINGS

- Expanded cash-based assistance reached new populations and minimized exposure to COVID-19
- Lack of recovery activities limited the ability to revive livelihoods
- BHA allowed IPs to adapt to changing conditions and needs
- Complex emergencies degraded Food Consumption Scores (FCS) and worsened Coping Strategies Index (CSI) scores in 2022; some countries showed small improvement in CSI but less in FCS (see map)

OVERVIEW OF AWARDS



KEY RESULTS (WFP)



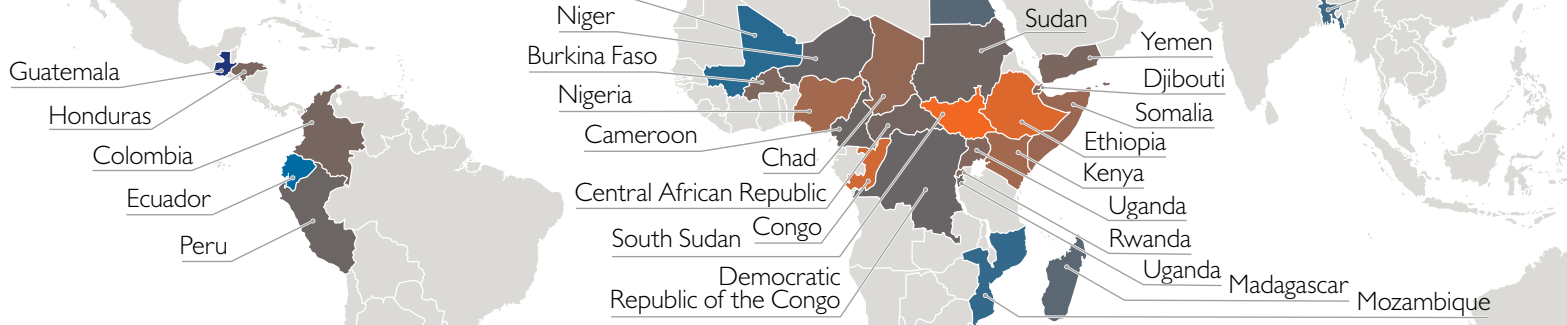
>6.6 million participants reached



198,170 metric tons of food delivered

The percent of households with acceptable FCS improved in 13 out of 33 WFP countries from 2021 to 2022 (17 of 33 reported improved CSI)

>0 Percent change shown in blue gradient
<0 Percent change shown in orange gradient



PROMISING PRACTICES

- Strategic planning, community engagement, and clear communication for effective scaling down
- Functional cross-training of staff to respond to emergency funding surges
- Expanding coverage to reach newly vulnerable populations, e.g., urban and peri-urban areas, the older persons, refugees
- Ongoing government capacity strengthening at all levels

PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

- Cash and voucher assistance through remote or digital modalities was highly effective for rapid response in areas with existing communication infrastructure and services, but alternative modalities or additional funding is needed where these are lacking.
- Enhancing capacity at national and local levels boosts program effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability, including capacity for multi-sectoral programming essential to maintain food security outcomes.
- While large-scale emergency funding is crucial for immediate needs, its withdrawal should be gradual to prevent erosion of results, BHA and IPs should work together on recovery and scale-down planning. **See the Thematic 2 study for more on this issue.**

Background

The downstream economic impacts of many national responses to COVID-19 interrupted livelihoods and threatened food and nutrition security. Globally, food security deteriorated as a result of the pandemic and its related impacts (FSIN and GNAFC, 2021). This was particularly evident in urban and peri-urban areas, refugee and displacement settings, and among people whose livelihoods depended on the informal sector (FSIN and GNAFC, 2021 & 2022). As a result, WFP, among other food security actors, expanded their caseloads, including to urban and peri-urban areas and new vulnerable populations; for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Kenya, Honduras, Madagascar, and Colombia.

Objective 2 of the Supplemental aimed to mitigate severe food security impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic in humanitarian settings. Priority was given to investments in emergency food assistance and livelihoods interventions. Awards incorporated other sectors, such as nutrition, health, and/or WASH. Given the scale of the response and need for quick mobilization, over 50 percent of the total funding and 79 percent of Objective 2 funding was allocated to WFP for the capacity to quickly respond to crises with humanitarian food assistance.

There were 58 FA awards implemented across 38 countries (37 WFP and 1 FAO). PIO awards tended to receive considerably larger sector totals on average than NGOs: \$19.3 million versus \$4.3 million. Objective 2 included 41 awards for Agriculture and ERMS and 23 awards for MPCA. In terms of geographic spread, Office of Africa region received half of the FA funding; Ethiopia was the largest recipient. Then split between MENAE and ALAC, with Syria and Afghanistan the single largest recipients, respectively. The primary data sources used for Objective 2 included 23 KIIs with WFP and BHA award managers (44 respondents) complemented by field level perspectives of BHA, IPs, Government and other stakeholders, and participants in Kenya, South Sudan, Jordan, and Honduras.

Outcomes and Key Drivers

Note on Indicator Results and Data Sources: Award-level output results are unavailable due to different reporting requirements for WFP. The output results provided on the first page of this objective section were derived based on the WFP annual country reporting, which is calculated from the proportion of the award to the country program budget. The NGO indicator data can be found in Annex E.2. Thus, this objective's results focus on outcome level results using various methodologies to estimate these results from WFP data sources triangulated with IP and BHA KIIs; evaluation case study country findings; as well as award reports and external literature. The main WFP data sources analyzed for outcome results include: a) WFP Annual Reports 2020-2022 FCS and CSI Results for the 38 WFP-award countries showing food security trends across the pandemic years; and b) WFP Outcome Monitoring Data for select WFP priority countries for which analysis of population-based versus participant food security data could be conducted. See Annex A (Methods) and E.2 (Objective 2).

WFP Annual Reports 2020-2022 FCS and CSI Results – across country awards

Key Finding: Complex emergencies continued to degrade FCS and CSI in 2022; some countries showed small improvement in CSI but less in FCS. Agreement across IP and BHA interviews representing 16 awards shows food security outcomes in numerous countries temporarily improved – or at least did not deteriorate significantly – over the timeframe in which the Supplemental was implemented. This can be seen in an analysis of change in households with acceptable FCS between 2021 and 2022 by country (Figure 5). However, key food security indicators returned to their pre-FY 2021 levels or lower – once funding stopped (Annex E.2). By 2022, WFP-funded countries with ongoing and worsening crises continued to see degradation in both indicators, as reported through annual reports. WFP-funded countries where Food Consumption Score (FCS) and Coping Strategies Index (CSI)

indicator targets were not met across targeted subgroups through 2022 included Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Ethiopia, Jordan, Nigeria, Somalia, and Uganda.

The percentage change in households with acceptable FCS between FYs 2020-2021 (Annex E.2) compared with FYs 2021-2022 (figure in infographic above) illustrates the shift in food security over time. The largest positive FCS and CSI changes occurred in Guatemala and Ecuador. Food consumption improved in some countries (e.g., Egypt, Mali, Syria) but deteriorated in others (e.g., Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, DRC, Uganda, Afghanistan). This is consistent with findings from the 2022 Global Report on Food Crises which shows the degree to which WFP’s country targeting supported through the FY 2021 Supplemental was aligned with countries identified as having high food insecurity in 2021 (GNAFC, 2022). Of the 12 highest funded countries with Supplemental awards, seven¹ are considered in crisis or worse (Integrated Phase Classification–Cadre Harmonisé (IPC-CH) Phase 3 or above). Similar shifts between FYs 2020-2021 and FYs 2021-2022 occurred relative to coping strategies; CSI deteriorated over time in DRC, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria and Afghanistan (Annex E.2) but improved in other countries (e.g., Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Sudan, CAR, Kenya). In some of the most fragile countries (e.g., Syria, Yemen), there was strong agreement among those interviewed that the “no regrets approach” supported through the Supplemental reached more people and helped prevent famine, though did not sustain food security outcomes post-award (see Thematic 2 for more information on this topic).

Figure 4. Change in CSI score between 2021 and 2022:WFP Countries

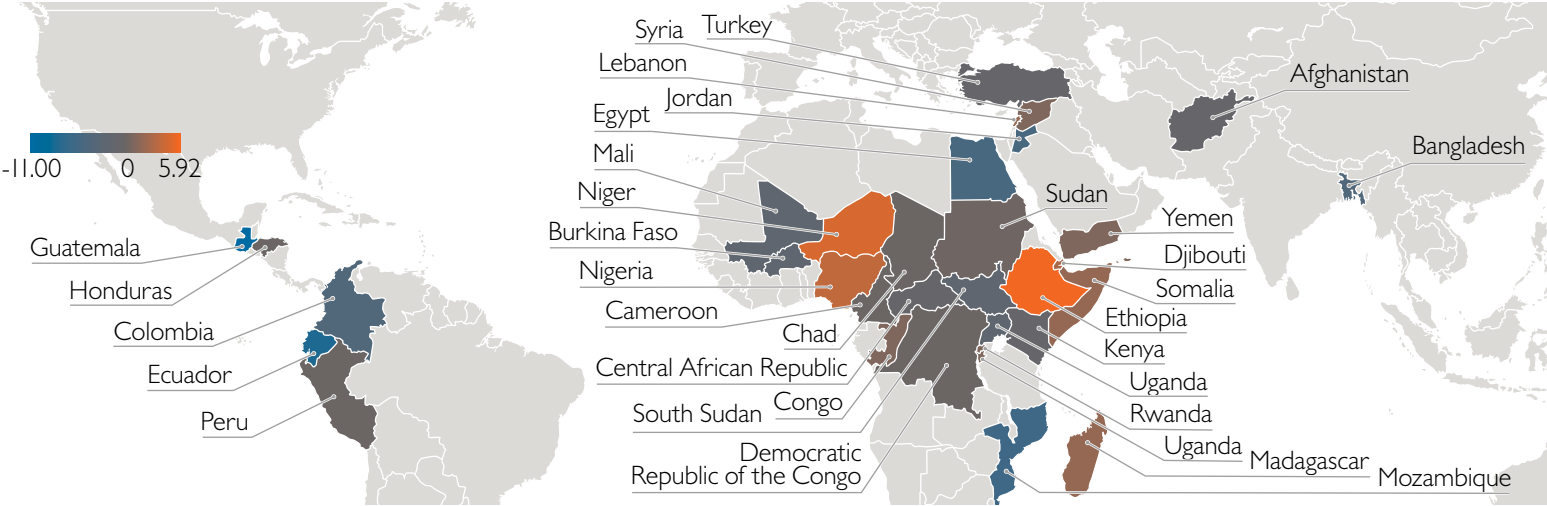


Table 3. Average changes in percent acceptable FCS and CSI scores between 2021 and 2022 in WFP countries supported with the Supplemental, by BHA region and overall

BHA Region	Change in % HHs w/ acceptable FCS	Change in CSI score
Africa	-5.39	0.29
ALAC	13.80	-4.00
MENAE	3.16	-1.50
Global	0.23	-0.94

¹ Ethiopia, Yemen, Somalia, DRC, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and South Sudan.

During the Supplemental, countries in ALAC and MENAE on average had more improved food security and less reliance on coping strategies than countries in OA (Table 3). It is important to note that because of the evaluation type—performance rather than impact evaluation, and the available data from WFP it is not possible to determine the extent of change that is attributed to the Supplemental.

Although more people received food assistance as a result of the Supplemental, there was widespread agreement among BHA KIs that the quality of response often declined due to reductions in the size of the rations (e.g., kilocalories (kcal), transfer amount) or the number of transfers because the need vastly outstripped available resources. This may, in part, help explain the mixed results in terms of positive versus negative change in food security indicators discussed above. However, they also felt this varied slightly between PIOs and NGOs in some countries. For example, price increases, supply chain issues, and other access challenges often resulted in WFP reducing rations (e.g., Syria, Yemen, DRC). NGOs who received the Supplemental were perceived by some BHA KIs as better able to maintain ration sizes; they felt that the PIO response was somewhat “diluted” compared to the NGO response.

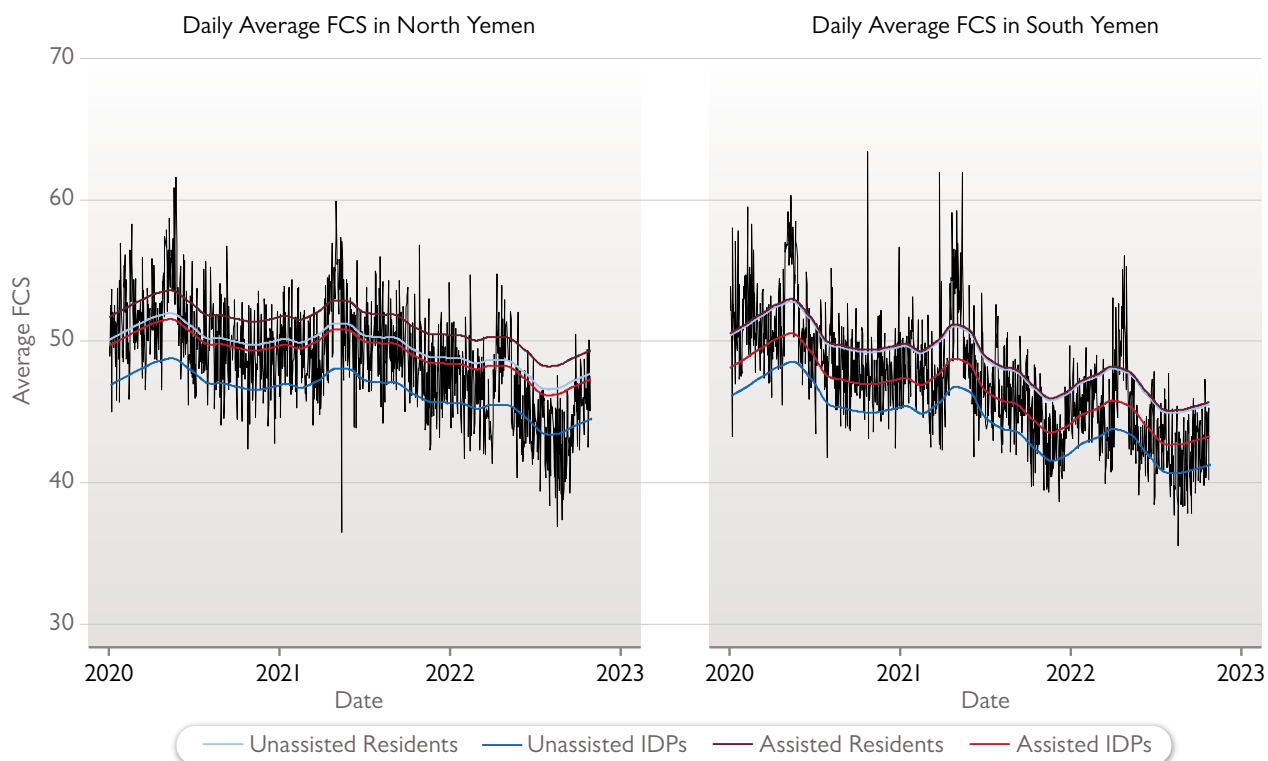
“NGOs were much more strategic [than WFP] in the way that they handled resources.” ~ BHA MENAE

For example, one interviewee in Colombia felt that it was easier for BHA to provide funding through large PIOs but indicated that there are also local NGOs with good capacity for large-scale humanitarian response and that a better balance between awards to PIOs and NGOs could improve effectiveness and efficiency of response. Regardless of partner type, interviewees all agreed that the Supplemental helped targeted populations survive the economic impacts of the pandemic over the short-term but failed to put them on better footing in its aftermath. The consensus among all interviewees was that it had little or no effect on food security even though it helped people in the near term and likely helped prevent starvation in some of the worst contexts (e.g., Somalia, Yemen). The lingering effects of COVID-19 and its economic repercussions were still being felt globally through 2022.

WFP Outcomes Analysis – for select awards

WFP partners with Geopoll and other agencies monitored national food security across countries with active assistance programs through daily phone-based surveys of randomly-selected households. While these surveys are not specifically intended to assess the impact of assistance, in several countries the questionnaires ask respondents whether they currently receive food assistance. A question of interest for the evaluation was whether the average food security level of recipients (e.g., using standard indicators like FCS and rCSI during 2020-2022) was significantly different from that of non-participants. Analysis from Yemen shows improved consumption for assisted households co-occurring with a decline in national food security (Figure 5). Recognizing the importance of regional differences, further analysis was conducted by region (i.e., North vs. South). In the North, there was no significant impact of assistance for all households, although there was a significant impact for internally displaced persons (IDPs) (who had far worse outcomes in the absence of assistance). With respect to rCSI, the total population surveyed appears to significantly benefit, regardless of IDP status, while IDPs remained worse off overall. In the South, there was considerable regional variation (Hadramaut had much better FCS scores, while Al Janad had worse). Assistance improved FCS for all households, but IDPs had lower scores regardless of assistance. This was also true for rCSI, with assistance helping overall, but IDPs had significantly higher coping scores than non-IDPs. The evaluation interprets these results as assistance in Northern Yemen may have more effectively assisted IDPs by improving consumption, whereas in the South, assistance improved food security for all recipients. Despite this, IDPs were more disadvantaged than non-IDPs.

Figure 5. Average FCS of WFP Yemen assisted households compared to unassisted from 2020-2022



Source: WFP Yemen mVAM datasets provided to the evaluation.

Additional Drivers and Promising Practices

Key Finding: Across KIIs, interviewees mentioned the importance of early action and recovery activities in emergency programming, which were not prioritized in the Supplemental. Examples include Honduras, Niger, Madagascar, Jordan, Colombia, and Kenya, where early recovery activities (e.g., livelihoods support) were implemented, although to a much smaller degree than food assistance. PIOs also stressed the importance of pre-positioning in-kind assistance (including the need for roads with year-round accessibility, sufficient warehousing, and transport), notably in Syria and South Sudan, where humanitarian access is often limited due to conflict and other safety concerns. In Somalia, WFP combined money from other donors to implement anticipatory actions, though not early recovery.

Several IP and BHA KIIs in South Sudan noted the need to “move beyond emergencies” and consider what comes after saving lives. According to them (and others), there are “too many emergencies” and people barely have time to recover from one shock before the next. The IP’s ability to implement any recovery activities varied across countries.² Findings from a BHA-commissioned livelihoods evaluation in the Northern Triangle, including Honduras and several Supplemental awards, noted implementation periods of at least 18 to 24 months should be the norm for humanitarian activities that include a livelihood recovery component.³ This would help ensure IPs have adequate time to: i) provide consistent support, ii) leverage technical assistance from partnering governmental agencies or NGOs, and iii) assess the sustained ability of livelihood interventions to meet basic needs.

² Government restrictions in some countries, such as Syria, may limit the types of activities that can be implemented.

³ EnCompass, L.L.C., 2024

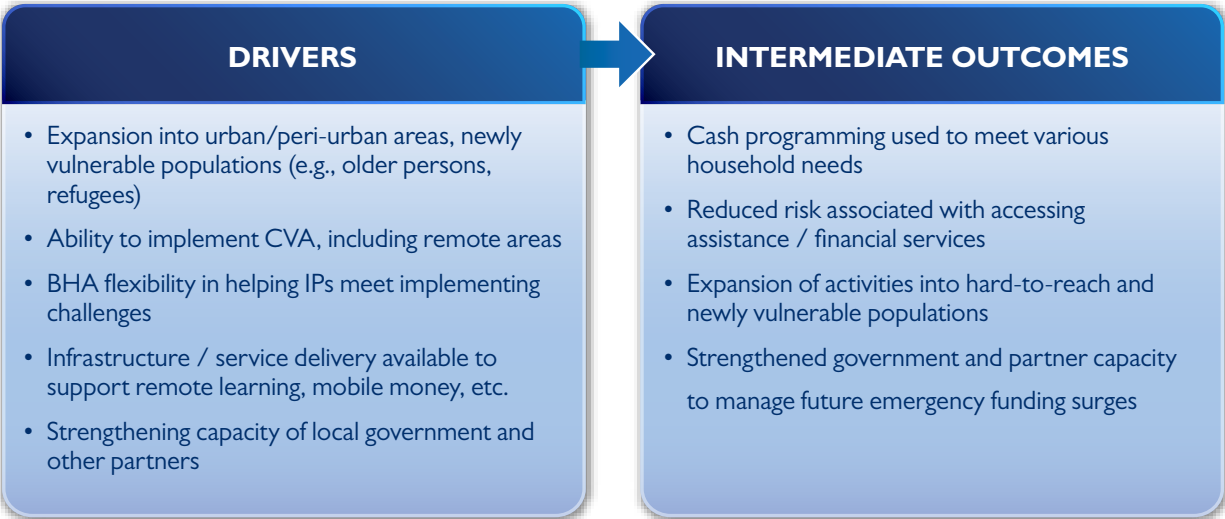
Key Finding: According to insights across KIIs and case studies, key drivers include the use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) and expanding into new areas for targeting and implementation—supported by BHA flexibility to do so (Figure 6).

All WFP awards but five included cash or vouchers, according to BHA's award data, with the cash component over \$210 million. The prominence of this modality in the pandemic was due to the ease and rapidity with which CVA could be implemented compared to other modalities and the better fit with social distancing and other restrictions, often making them a preferential modality by IPs and participants. IP KIIs stressed the importance of cash transfers, and particularly mobile money approaches, which met participant needs while simultaneously providing a sense of control over how, when, and where cash was spent. CVA also provided less risk of exposure to COVID-19 for IPs, service providers, and participants. As noted in the After-Action Review of WFP's urban response in Kenya, cash allowed households "choice and flexibility in spending" (WFP, 2021). WFP Kenya staff perceived their urban CVA response to have contributed to a reduction in violence, such as petty theft in informal settlements and refugee camps. Good practices across Syria, Honduras, South Sudan and Kenya combined cash with training, community engagement, and feedback mechanisms.

As indicated in the Kenya case above, new areas for targeting under the Supplemental included urban and peri-urban populations such as informal settlements, slums, and among refugees. Urban response required development of new targeting criteria or adaptation of existing participant lists to include those individuals made vulnerable by the pandemic. KIIs with PIOs (33) and NGOs (20) showed a general appreciation of BHA's flexibility in expanding to new areas (e.g., urban, peri-urban) and generally adapting to changing contextual factors (e.g., inflation, supply chain disruptions, COVID-19 related guidance). In Jordan, non-Syrian refugees, who had not previously received WFP support, were identified as most vulnerable to food and economic insecurity and were targeted for cash transfers (WFP 2022a). In Colombia, caseloads from COVID-19 were well under any expectation, and BHA supported the government's request to expand targeting for those with reduced food access, even after restrictions were lifted, including Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and several Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities (WFP 2022b). This is discussed further in the Thematic 2 study.

In South Sudan, among other locations, IPs praised BHA for their flexibility in adapting programming to account for COVID-19 guidelines and protocols, changes in modality (e.g., shifting from a hand pump to solar pump), and flexibility to use savings from activities that could not be implemented (e.g., due to COVID restrictions) to fill funding gaps elsewhere (e.g., shortage of fishing and seed kits).

Figure 6. Outcome pathway for drivers of success



Key Finding: System capacities and infrastructure investments are critical for scale up of responses. In countries that had previously invested in building government capacity (e.g., Colombia, South Sudan, Kenya), IPs reported that capacity strengthening of and/or coordination with government partners was key to the success of the Supplemental. Funding provided by BHA's predecessors (legacy Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Food for Peace (FFP) as well as other donors, that supported capacity building with national and local governments in humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction (DRR), nutrition/health, and WASH in particular, provided a solid foundation for continued collaboration, coordination, and training under the Supplemental. This was particularly evident in South Sudan, where pre-pandemic funds provided through FFP and OFDA supported establishment of an Ebola coordination mechanism that was in place and utilized during the COVID-19 response. According to IPs in South Sudan, even though the COVID-19 caseload and number of deaths were much lighter than feared, the Ebola response mechanism greatly improved the efficiency and multi-sectoral effectiveness of the response under the Supplemental. Finally, investments in infrastructure and service providers are necessary elements of successful implementation for numerous types of activities, including food assistance. For WFP CVA activities, telecommunications services (e.g., mobile phone and internet coverage for remote payments) and financial service providers with mobile money/banking applications were critical (e.g., Kenya, Somalia).

Challenges

BHA and IP KIIs agreed that COVID-19 created numerous challenges around food security and livelihoods assistance, some of which were new, and others simply exacerbated those often associated with humanitarian responses. Overall, they underscored the importance of flexibility, preparedness, and the ability to quickly adapt to changing circumstances as key components of effective response strategies. See Annex E.2 for additional discussion of these challenges.

Box 4. Challenges Summary



Layered shocks: Nearly all interviewees in South Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, and Honduras noted the multi-shock context of their implementing areas, over which COVID-19 was layered but not necessarily of most immediate concern for targeted populations.



Logistical and operational challenges: Delays in imported nutrition commodities and market shortages were just a few of the many issues WFP and IPs faced.



Scaling down: The Supplemental required significant scaling-up of IP programming capacity at the country level with a swift scaling-down. Learning on this challenge is captured in the Thematic 2 study.



Limited accountability for WFP funds: Reliance on WFP contributed to timeliness of response but also to a lack visibility on funding outputs and outcomes.

Relevance to Needs

Insights from KIIs and FGDs in Kenya, Honduras, Syria, and South Sudan suggest that i) targeting was widely perceived as appropriate, though some cases of exclusion error were reported, and ii) the assistance provided through the Supplemental helped mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic on people's livelihoods and to mitigate some severe food insecurity, though it was not enough to cover all needs. FGD participants and KIIs acknowledged community participation in the targeting process, helping to ensure alignment of interventions with the most immediate and pressing needs of communities, particularly acute food shortages. For example, in Honduras, communities were personally visited by IPs to learn about their needs as part of the process. Across the case studies, community leaders assisted in the targeting process, ensuring inclusion of households that were initially missed

(e.g., with other targeting approaches). Changes to the composition of food baskets based on community feedback and logistical capabilities was another innovative approach implemented in Syria to accommodate and adapt to local needs.

“The assistance was very important because we are displaced and have lost everything we own... and do not have the money to buy food.” ~ FGD Northern Syria

Interviewees from BHA, PIOs, and NGOs consistently indicated that the Supplemental was critical for meeting the immediate needs of people adversely affected by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19. KIIs felt that generally more people were helped as a result of the Supplemental than if it had not happened – even with its challenges. The Supplemental allowed IPs to expand caseloads by focusing on new geographic areas and types of participants as well as “topping-up” previously reduced rations (e.g., due to price increases) in some cases (e.g., Niger). As such, they felt that the Supplemental was instrumental in reaching output targets even if it did not improve food security measures.

Programming Considerations

1. CVA through remote payment is effective and efficient modality for rapid humanitarian response, especially where communications infrastructure and service provision exist. In their absence, programs may consider other modalities or include funding to develop or upgrade required support services (e.g., financial services, internet connectivity).
2. Local capacity at the national and local levels significantly improves effectiveness and efficiency of programming and contributes to longer-term sustainability of improved outcomes. Capacity building for multi-sectoral programming is crucial to sustain food security outcomes (i.e., in DRR, early action/early response, early recovery, health/nutrition, and WASH systems) and should be programmed through BHA’s ESF and IDA funding streams as much as possible.
3. Although large-scale emergency, or surge, funding is primarily meant to meet immediate needs of vulnerable populations, its ultimate withdrawal should not be precipitous such that backsliding occurs and people are potentially worse off than before. BHA and IPs agreed that “going big at the beginning” may be necessary in order to help as many people as possible with immediate needs but that some recovery is also needed, at least for a subset of people. BHA should help IPs plan for and layer other USG funding sources for recovery, and for responsible scale-down. See the Thematic 2 study.